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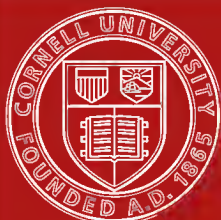
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**THE RIVIERA OF THE  
CORNICHE ROAD**









A RIVIERA GARDEN.

# The Riviera of the Corniche Road

BY

SIR FREDERICK TREVES, BART.

G.C.V.O., C.B., LL.D.

Serjeant-Surgeon to His Majesty the King ; Author of "The  
Other Side of the Lantern," "The Cradle of the Deep,"  
"The Country of the Ring and the Book," "High-  
ways and By-ways of Dorset," etc. etc.

*Illustrated by 92 Photographs by the Author*

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## Preface

THIS book deals with that part of the French Riviera which is commanded by the Great Corniche Road—the part between Nice and Mentone—together with such places as are within easy reach of the Road.

I am obliged to the proprietors of the *Times* for permission to reprint an article of mine contributed to that journal in March, 1920. It appears as Chapter XXXVII.

I am much indebted to Dr. Hagberg Wright, of the London Library, for invaluable help in the collecting of certain historical data.

FREDERICK TREVES.

MONTE CARLO,

*Christmas, 1920*



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# THE RIVIERA OF THE CORNICHE ROAD

## I

### EARLY DAYS IN THE RIVIERA

**T**HE early history of this brilliant country is very dim, as are its shores and uplands when viewed from an oncoming barque at the dawn of day. The historian-adventurer sailing into the past sees before him just such an indefinite country as opens up before the eye of the mariner. Hills and crags—alone unchangeable—rise against the faint light in the sky. The sound of breakers on the beach alone can tell where the ocean ends and where the land begins; while the slopes, the valleys and the woods are lost in one blank impenetrable shadow.

As the daylight grows, or as our knowledge grows, the forms of men come into view, wild creatures armed with clubs and stones. They will be named Ligurians, just as the earlier folk of Britain were named Britons. Later on less uncouth men, furnished with weapons of bronze or iron, can be seen to land from boats or to be plodding along the shore as if they had journeyed far. They will be called Phœnicians, Carthaginians or

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

Phocæans according to the leaning of the writer who deals with them. There may be bartering on the beach, there may be fighting or pantomimic love-making; but in the end those who are better armed take the place of the old dwellers, and the rough woman in her apron of skins walks off into the wood by the side of the man with the bronze knife and the beads.

There is little more than this to be seen through the haze of far distant time. The written history, such as it is, is thus part fiction, part surmise, for the very small element of truth is based upon such fragments of evidence as a few dry bones, a few implements, a bracelet, a defence work, a piece of pottery.

The Ligurians or aborigines formed themselves, for purposes of defence, into clans or tribes. They built fortified camps as places of refuge. Relics of these forts or castra remain, and very remarkable relics they are, for they show immense walls built of blocks of unworked stone that the modern wall builder may view with amazement. Nowhere are these camps found in better preservation than around Monte Carlo.

In the course of time into this savage country, marching in invincible columns, came the stolid, orderly legions of Rome. They subdued the hordes of hillmen, broke up their forts, and commemorated the victory by erecting a monument on the crest of La Turbie which stands there to this day. The Romans brought with them discipline and culture, and above all, peace. The natives, reassured, came down from their retreats among the heights and established themselves in the towns which were springing up by the edge of the sea. The Condamine of Monaco, for example, was inhabited during the first century of

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the present era, as is made manifest by the relics which have been found there.

With the fall of the Roman Empire peace vanished and the whole country lapsed again into barbarism. It was overrun from Marseilles to Genoa by gangs of hearty ruffians whose sole preoccupation was pillage, arson and murder. They uprooted all that the Romans had established, and left in their fetid trail little more than a waste of burning huts and dead men.

These pernicious folk were called sometimes Vandals, sometimes Goths, sometimes Burgundians, and sometimes Swabians. The gentry, however, who seem to have been the most persistent and the most diligent in evil were the Lombards. They are described as "ravishing the country" for the immoderate period of two hundred years, namely from 574 to 775. How it came about that any inhabitants were left after this exhausting treatment the historian does not explain.

At the end of the eighth century there may possibly have been a few years' quiet along the Riviera, during which time the people would have recovered confidence and become hopeful of the future. Now the Lombards had always come down upon them by land, so they knew in which direction to look for their troubles, and, moreover, they knew the Lombards and had a quite practical experience of their habits. After a lull in alarms and in paroxysms of outrage, and after what may even be termed a few calm years, something still more dreadful happened to these dwellers in a fool's paradise. Marauders began to come, not by the hill passes, but by sea and to land out of boats. They were marauders, too, of a peculiarly virulent type, compared with whom the

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Lombards were as babes and sucklings; for not only were their actions exceptionally violent and their weapons unusually noxious, but they themselves were terrifying to look at, for they were nearly black.

These alarming people were the Saracens, otherwise known as the Moors or Arabs. They belonged to a great race of Semitic origin which had peopled Syria, the borders of the Red Sea and the North of Africa. They invaded—in course of time—not only this tract of coast, but also Rhodes, Cyprus, France, Spain and Italy. They were by birth and inheritance wanderers, fighters and congenital pirates. They spread terror wherever they went, and their history may be soberly described as “awful.” They probably appeared at their worst in Provence and at their best in Spain, where they introduced ordered government, science, literature and commerce, and left behind them the memory of elegant manners and some of the most graceful buildings in the world.

As early as about 800 the Saracens had made themselves masters of Eze, La Turbie and Sant’ Agnese; while by 846 they seem to have terrorised the whole coast from the Rhone to the Genoese Gulf, and in the first half of the tenth century to have occupied nearly every sea-town from Arles to Mentone. Finally, in 980, a great united effort was made to drive the marauders out of France. It was successful. The leader of the Ligurian forces was William of Marseilles, first Count of Provence, and one of the most distinguished of his lieutenants was a noble Genoese soldier by name Gibellino Grimaldi. It is in the person of this knight that the Grimaldi name first figures in the history of the Ligurian coast.

## Early Days in the Riviera

As soon as the Saracens had departed the powers that had combined to drive them from the country began to fight among themselves. They fought in a vague, confused, spasmodic way, with infinite vicissitudes and in every available place, for over five hundred years. The siege of Nice by the French in 1543 may be conveniently taken as the end of this particular series of conflicts.

It was a period of petty fights in which the Counts of Provence were in conflict with the rulers of Northern Italy, with the Duke of Milan, it may be, or the Duke of Savoy or the Doge of Genoa. It was a time when town fought with town, when Pisa was at war with Genoa and Genoa with Nice, when the Count of Ventimiglia would make an onslaught on the Lord of Eze and the ruffian who held Gorbio would plan a descent upon little Roquebrune. This delectable part of the continent, moreover, came within the sphere of that almost interminable war which was waged between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines. In the present area the Grimaldi were for the Guelphs and the Pope, and the Spinola for the Ghibellines and the Emperor. The feud began in the twelfth century and lasted until the French invasion in 1494.

This period of five hundred years was a time of interest that was dramatic rather than momentous. So far as the South of France was concerned one of the most beautiful tracts of country in Europe was the battleground for bands of mediæval soldiers, burly, dare-devil men carrying fantastic arms and dressed in the most picturesque costumes the world has seen.

It was a period of romance, and, indeed—from a scenic point of view—of romance in its most alluring aspect. Here were all the folk and the incidents made famous by

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the writers of a hundred tales—the longbowman in his leather jerkin, the man in the slashed doublet sloping a halberd, the gay musketeer, the knight in armour and plumes, as well as the little walled town, the parley before the gate, the fight for the drawbridge and the dash up the narrow street.

It was a period when there were cavalcades on the road, glittering with steel, with pennons and with banners, when there were ambushes and frenzied flights, carousing of the Falstaffian type at inns, and dreadful things done in dungeons. It was a time of noisy banquets in vaulted halls with dogs and straw on the floor ; a time of desperate rescues, of tragic escapes, of fights on prison roofs, and of a general and brilliant disorder. It was a delusive epoch, too, with a pretty terminology, when the common hack was a palfrey, the footman a varlet, and the young woman a damosel.

The men in these brawling times were, in general terms, swashbucklers and thieves ; but they had some of the traits of crude gentlemen, some rudiments of honour, some chivalry of an emotional type, and an unreliable reverence for the pretty woman.

It was a time to read about rather than to live in ; a period that owes its chief charm to a safe distance and to the distortion of an artificial mirage. In any case one cannot fail to realise that these scenes took place in spots where tramcars are now running, where the char-à-banc rumbles along, and where the anæmic youth and the brazen damosel dance to the jazz music of an American band.

When the five hundred years had come to an end there were still, in this particular part of the earth, wars and

## Early Days in the Riviera

rumours of wars that ceased not ; but they were ordinary wars of small interest save to the student in a history class, for the day of the hand-to-hand combat and of the dramatic fighting in streets had passed away.

So far as our present purpose is concerned the fact need only be noted that the spoiled and petted Riviera has been the scene of almost continuous disturbance and bloodshed for the substantial period of some seventeen hundred years, and that it has now become a Garden of Peace, calmed by a kind of agreeable dream-haunted stupor such as may befall a convulsed man who has been put asleep by cocaine.

## II

### THE CORNICHE ROAD

**I**T is hardly necessary to call to mind the fact that there are several Corniche roads along the Riviera. The term implies a fringing road, a road that runs along a cornice or ledge (French, *Corniche*; Italian, *Cornice*).

The term will, therefore, be often associated with a coast road that runs on the edge or border of the sea or on a shelf above it.

There are the Chemin de la Corniche at Marseilles which runs as far east as the Prado, the Corniche d'Or near Cannes, the three Corniche Roads beyond Nice, and—inland—the Corniche de Grasse.

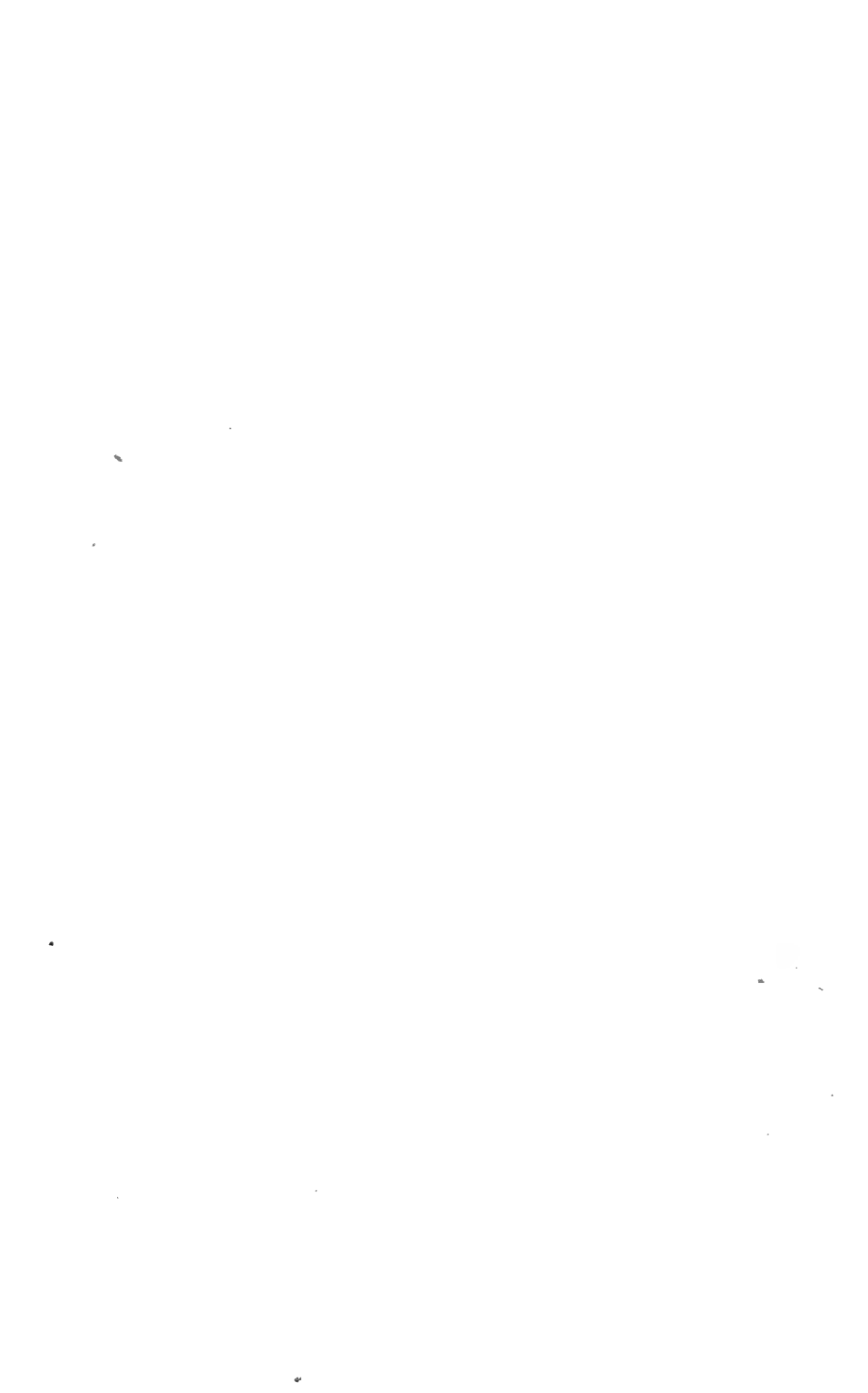
The bare term "The Corniche Road" is, however, generally understood to refer to the greatest road of them all, La Grande Corniche.

Of all the great roads in Europe it is probable that La Grande Corniche—which runs from Nice eastwards towards Italy—is the best known and the most popular. Roads become famous in many ways, some by reason of historical associations, some on account of the heights they reach, and others by the engineering difficulties they have been able to surmount. La Grande Corniche can claim none of these distinctions. It is comparatively a modern road, it mounts to little more than 1,700 feet, and it can-





AT THE BEND OF THE ROAD.



## The Corniche Road

not boast of any great achievement in its making. It passes by many towns but it avoids them all, all save one little forgotten village outside whose walls it sweeps with some disdain.

It starts certainly from Nice, but it goes practically nowhere, since long before Mentone is in view it drops into a quite common highway, and thus incontinently ends. It is not even the shortest way from point to point, being, on the contrary, the longest. It cannot pretend to be what the Italians call a "master way," since no road of any note either enters it or leaves it.

In so far as it evades all towns it is unlike the usual great highway. It passes through no cobbled, wondering street; breaks into no quiet, fountained square; crosses no market-place alive with chattering folk; receives no blessing from the shadow of a church. Nowhere is its coming heralded by an avenue of obsequious trees, it forces its way through no vaulted gateway, it lingers by no village green, it knows not the scent of a garden nor the luscious green of a cultivated field. Neither the farmer's cart nor the lumbering diligence will be met with on this unamiable road, nor will its quiet be disturbed by the patter of a flock of sheep nor by a company of merry villagers on their way to the fair.

La Grande Corniche is, in fact, a modern military road built by the French under Napoleon I in 1806. It was made with murderous intent. It was constructed to carry arms and men, guns and munitions and the implements of war. It was a road of destruction designed to convey bloodshed and desolation into Italy and beyond. He who conceived it had in his mind the picture of a road alive, from end to end, with columns of fighting men

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marching eastwards under a cloud of angry dust with the banner of France in the van ; had in his ears the merciless tramp of ten thousand feet, the clatter of sweating cavalry, the rumble of unending cannon wheels. It was a picture, he thought, worthy of the heart-racking labour that the making of the road involved.

But yet, in spite of all this, the popularity of the road is readily to be understood. It is cut out, as a mere thread, upon the side of a mountain range which is thrown into as many drooping folds as is a vast curtain gathered up into a fraction of its width. It is never monotonous, never, indeed, even straight. It winds in and out of many a valley, it skirts many a fearful gorge, it clings to the flank of many a treacherous slope. Here it creeps beneath a jutting crag, there it mounts in the sunlight over a radiant hill or dips into the silence of a rocky glen.

It has followed in its making any level ledge that gave a foothold to man or beast. It has used the goat track ; it has used the path of the mountaineer ; while at one point it has taken to itself a stretch of the ancient Roman road. It is a daring, determined highway, headstrong and self-confident, hesitating before no difficulty and daunted by no alarms, heeding nothing, respecting nothing, and obedient only to the call "onwards to Italy at any cost !"

From its eyrie it looks down upon a scene of amazing enchantment, upon the foundations of the everlasting hills, upon a sea glistening like opal, upon a coast with every fantastic variation of crag and cliff, of rounded bay and sparkling beach, of wooded glen and fern-decked, murmuring chine. Here are bright villas by the water's

## The Corniche Road

edge, a white road that wanders as aimlessly along as a dreaming child, a town or two, and a broad harbour lined with trees. Far away are daring capes, two little islands, and a line of hills so faint as to be almost unreal. It is true, indeed, as the writer of a well-known guide book has said, that "the Corniche Road is one of the most beautiful roads in Europe."

Moreover, it passes through a land which is a Vanity Fair to the frivolous, a paradise to the philanderer, and a garden of peace to all who would escape the turmoil of the world. It is a lazy, careless country, free from obtrusive evidence of toil and labour, for there are neither works nor factories within its confines. Here the voice of the agitator is not heard, while the roar of political dispute falls upon the contented ear as the sound of a distant sea.

The Grand Corniche is now a road devoted to the seeker after pleasure. People traverse it, not with the object of arriving at any particular destination, but for the delight of the road itself, of the joy it gives to the eye and to the imagination. Its only traffic is what the transport agent would call "holiday traffic"; for when the idle season ends the highway is deserted. In earlier days there would rumble along the road the carriage and four of the traveller of great means; then came the humbler vehicle hired from the town; then the sleek motor; and finally, as a sign of democratic progress, the char-à-banc, the omnibus, and the motor-brake.

No visitor to the Riviera of any self-respect can leave without traversing the Corniche Road. Mark Twain says that "there are many sights in the Bermudas, but they are easily avoided." This particular road cannot be avoided.

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

The traveller who returns to his home without having "done" La Grande Corniche may as well leave Rome without seeing the Forum.

The most picturesque section of the road is that between Nice and Eze. Starting from Nice it winds up along the sides of Mont Vinaigrier and Mont Gros which here form the eastern bank of the Paillon valley. The hills are covered with pine and olive trees, vines and oaks. There is soon attained a perfect view over the whole town of Nice, when it will be seen how commanding is the position occupied by the Castle Hill. Across the valley are Cimiez and St. Pons. At the first bend, as the height is climbed, is a tablet to mark the spot where two racing motorists were killed. When the road turns round the northern end of Mont Gros a fine view of the Paillon valley is displayed. This valley is much more attractive at a distance than near at hand. By the river's bank on one side is St. André with its seventeenth-century château; while on the other side is the Roman station of La Trinité-Victor, a little place of a few houses and a church, where the old Roman road comes down from Laghet. High up above St. André, at the height of nearly 1,000 feet, is the curious village of Falicon. Far away, at a distance of some seven miles, is Peille, a patch of grey in a cup among the mountains. Northwards the Paillon river is lost to view at Drap.

When the road has skirted the eastern side of Mont Vinaigrier the Col des Quatre Chemins is reached (1,131 feet). Here are an inn and a ridiculous monument to General Massena. The hills that border on the road are now bleak and bare. Just beyond the col is a fascinating view of Cap Ferrat and Cap de St. Hospice. The

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peninsula is spread out upon the sea like a model in dark green wax on a sheet of blue. The road now skirts the bare Monts Pacanaglia and Fourche and reaches the Col d'Eze (1,694 feet), where is unfolded the grandest panorama that the Corniche can provide. The coast can be followed from the Tête de Chien to St. Tropez. The wizened town of Eze comes into sight, and below it is the beautiful Bay of Eze, with the Pointe de Cabuel stretched out at the foot of Le Sueil.

The view inland over the Alps and far away to the snows is superb. To the left are Vence and Les Gorges du Loup, together with the town of St. Jeannet placed at the foot of that mighty precipice, the Baou de St. Jeannet, which attaining, as it does, a height of 2,736 feet is the great landmark of the country round. Almost facing the spectator are Mont Chauve de Tourette (2,365 feet) and Mont Macaron. The former is to be recognised by the fort on its summit. They are distant about five miles. To the right is Mont Agel with its familiar scar of bare stones. Some two kilometres beyond Eze the Capitaine is reached, the point at which the Corniche Road attains its greatest height, that of 1,777 feet.

The track now very slowly descends. When La Turbie (1,574 feet) is passed a splendid view is opened up of Monaco and Monte Carlo, of the Pointe de la Vieille, of Cap Martin, and of the coast of Italy as far as Bordighera. Roquebrune—which can be seen at its best from the Corniche—is passed below the town, and almost at once the road joins the sober highway that leads to Mentone and ends its romantic career on a tram-line.

### III

#### NICE : THE PROMENADE DES ANGLAIS

**N**ICE is a somewhat gross, modern seaside town which is beautiful in its situation but in little else. It lies at the mouth of a majestic valley and on the shores of a generous bay, open to the sun, but exposed at the same time to every villainous wind that blows. It is an unimaginative town with most excellent shops and a complete, if noisy, tramway system. It is crowded, and apparently for that reason popular. It is proud of its fine sea front and of the bright and ambitious buildings which are ranged there, as if for inspection and to show Nice at its best.

The body of the town is made up of a vast collection of houses and streets of a standard French pattern and little individuality. Viewed from any one of the heights that rise above it, Nice is picturesque and makes a glorious, widely diffused display of colour; but as it is approached the charm diminishes, the dull suburbs damp enthusiasm, and the bustling, noisy, central streets complete the disillusion. On its outskirts is a crescent of pretty villas and luxuriant gardens which encircle it as a garland may surround a plain, prosaic face. The country in the neighbourhood of this capital of the Alpes Maritimes is singularly charming, and, therefore, the abiding desire of the visitor to Nice is to get out of it.



## Nice : The Promenade des Anglais

Along the sea-front is the much-photographed Promenade des Anglais with its line of palm trees. It is marked with a star and with capital letters in the guide books and it is quite worthy of this distinction. It appears to have been founded just one hundred years ago to provide work for the unemployed. To judge from the crowd that frequents it it is still the Promenade of the Unemployed.

The Promenade has great dignity. It is spacious and, above all, it is simple. As a promenade it is indeed ideal. It is free from the robust vulgarity, the intrusions, and the restlessness of the parade in an English popular seaside resort. There are no penny-in-the-slot machines, no bathing-houses daubed over with advertisements, no minstrels, no entertainments on the beach, no importunate boatmen, no persistent photographers. If it gives the French the idea that it is a model of a promenade of the English, it will lead to an awakening when the Frenchman visits certain much-frequented seaside towns in England.

A little pier—the Jetée-Promenade—steps off from the main parade. On it is a casino which provides varied and excellent attractions. The building belongs to the Bank Holiday Period of architecture and is accepted without demur as exactly the type of structure that a joy-dispensing pier should produce. It is, however, rather disturbing to learn that this fragile casino, with its music-hall and its refreshment bars, is a copy of St. Sophia in Constantinople. That mosque is one of the most impressive and most inspiring ecclesiastical edifices in the world, as well as one of the most stupendous. Those who know Constantinople and have been struck by the lordly

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

magnificence of its great religious fane will turn from this dreadful travesty with horror. It is a burlesque that hurts, as would the "Hallelujah Chorus" played on a penny whistle.

It is along the Promenade des Anglais—the Promenade of the Unemployed—that the great event of the Carnival of Nice, the Battle of Flowers, is held every year. The Carnival began probably as the modest festa of a village community, a picturesque expression of the religion of the time, a reverent homage to the country and to the flowers that made it beautiful. It seems to have been always associated with flowers and one can imagine the passing by of a procession of boys and girls with their elders, all decked with flowers, as a spectacle both gracious and beautiful.

It has developed now with the advancing ugliness of the times. The simple maiden, clad in white, with her garland of wild flowers, has grown into a coarse, unseemly monster, blatant and indecorous, surrounded by a raucous mob carrying along with it the dust of a cyclone. The humble village fête has become a means of making money and an opportunity for clamour, licence and display. Reverence of any kind or for anything is not a notable attribute of the modern mind; while with the advance of a pushing democracy gentle manners inevitably fade away.

It is pitiable that the Carnival has to do with flowers and that it is through them that it seeks to give expression to its loud and flamboyant taste. It is sad to see flowers put to base and meretricious uses, treated as mere dabs of paint, forced into unwonted forms, made up as anchors or crowns and mangled in millions. The festival is not so



NICE : THE OLD TERRACES.



## Nice : The Promenade des Anglais

much a battle of flowers as a Massacre of Flowers, a veritable St. Bartholomew's Day for buds and blossoms.

The author of a French guide book suggests that the visitor should attend the Carnival "at least once." He makes this proposal with evident diffidence. He owns that the affair is one of *animation incroyable*, that the streets are occupied by *une cohue de gens en délire* and recommends the pleasure seeker to carry no valuables, to wear no clothes that are capable of being spoiled, no hat that would suffer from being bashed in, and to remember always that the dust is *énorme*.

Those who like a rollicking crowd, hustling through streets a-flutter with a thousand flags and hung with festoons by the kilometre, and those who have a passion for throwing things at other people might go even more than once. They will see in the procession much that is ludicrous, grotesque and puerile, an exaggerated combination of a circus car parade and a native war dance, as well as a display of misapplied decoration of extreme ingenuity.

On the other hand, the flower lover should escape to the mountains and hide until the days of the Carnival are over, and with him might go any who would prefer a chaplet of violets on the head of a girl to a laundry basket full of peonies on the bonnet of a motor.

On that side of the old town which borders upon the sea are relics which illustrate the more frivolous mood of Nice as it was expressed before the building of the Promenade des Anglais. These relics show in what manner the visitor to Nice in those far days sought joy in life. Parallel to the beach is the Cours Saleya, a long, narrow, open space shaded by trees. It was at one time a fashionable promenade, comparable to the Pantiles at

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

Tunbridge Wells. It is now a flower and vegetable market. On the ocean side of this Cours are two lines of shops, very humble and very low. The roofs of these squat houses are level and continuous and so form two terraces running side by side and extending for a distance of 800 feet.

These are the famous *Terrasses* where the beaux and the beauties of Nice promenaded, simpered, curtsied or bowed, and when this walk by the shore was vowed to be "monstrous fine, egad."<sup>1</sup> The terraces are now deserted, are paved with vulgar asphalt and edged by a disorderly row of tin chimneys. On one side, however, of this once crowded and fashionable walk are a number of stone benches, on which the ladies sat, received their friends, and displayed their Paris frocks. The terrace is as uninviting as a laundry drying ground and these grey, melancholy benches alone recall the fact that the place once rippled with colour and sparkled with life as if it were the enclosure at Ascot.

<sup>1</sup> The first of these terraces was completed in 1780 and the second one in 1844.

## IV

### NICE : THE OLD TOWN

**L**OOKING down upon the city from Mont Boron it is easy to distinguish Nice the Illustrious from Nice the Parvenu. There is by the sea an isolated green hill with precipitous flanks. This is the height upon which once stood the ancient citadel. On one side is a natural harbour—the old port—while on the other side is a jumble of weather-stained roofs and narrow lanes which represent the old town. The port, the castle hill, with the little cluster of houses at its foot, form the real Nice, the Nice of history.

Radiating from this modest centre, like the petals of a sunflower spreading from its small brown disc, are the long, straight streets, the yellow and white houses and the red roofs of modern Nice. This new town appears from afar as an immense expanse of bright biscuit-yellow spread between the blue of the bay and the deep green of the uplands. It presents certain abrupt excrescences on its surface, like isolated warts on a pale face. These are the famous hotels. This city of to-day is of little interest. It commends itself merely as a very modern and very prosperous seaside resort. Within the narrow circuit of the old town, on the other hand, there is much that is worthy to be seen and to be pondered over.

It is said that Nice was founded by the Phocæans about

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

the year 350 B.C., and that the name of the place, Nicæa, the city of victory, records the victory of these very obscure people over the still more obscure Ligurians. The Romans paid little heed to Nice. They passed it by and founded their own city, Cemenelum (now Cimiez), on higher ground away from the sea. Nice was then merely the port, the poor suburb, the fishers' town. After Cimiez came to an end Nice began to grow and flourish. It was, in the natural course of events, duly sacked or burned by barbarous hordes and by Saracens, and was besieged as soon as it had walls and was besiegable. It took part in the local wars, now on this side, now on that. It had, in common with nearly every town in Europe, its periods of pestilence and its years of famine.

In the thirteenth century it fell into the hands of the Counts of Provence, and at the end of the fourteenth century it came under the protection of the Dukes of Savoy. Like many a worthier place it was shifted to and fro like a pawn on a chess-board. It had for years a strong navy and the reputation of being a terror to the Barbary pirates. These tiresome men from Barbary interfered with the pursuits of Nice, which consisted largely of robbery on the high seas. Nice did not object to the Barbary men as pirates but as poachers on the Nice grounds. The picture drawn by one writer who represents Nice in the guise of an indignant moralist repressing piracy because of its wickedness, may be compared with the conception of Satan rebuking sin. In 1250 Charles of Anjou, Prince of Provence, built a naval arsenal at Nice. It occupied the area now covered by the Cours Saleya but was entirely swept away by a storm in 1516.

In 1548 Nice—then a town of Savoy—was attacked by



## Nice : The Old Town

the French and sustained a very memorable siege, which is dealt with in the chapter which follows. After this it became quite a habit with the French to besiege Nice; for they set upon it, with varying success, in 1600, again in 1691, in 1706, and again in 1744. Finally, after changes of ownership too complex to mention, Nice was annexed to France, together with Savoy, in the year 1860.

In Bosio's interesting work<sup>1</sup> there is a plan of the city of Nice published in 1610. Although bearing the date named it represents the disposition of the city as it existed at a much earlier period. It shows that the town was situated on the left or east bank of the Paillon and that it was divided into two parts, the High Town and the Low Town. The former occupied the summit of the Castle Hill, was strongly fortified and surrounded by substantial walls. On this plateau were the castle of the governor, the cathedral, the bishop's palace, the Hôtel de Ville, and the residences of certain nobles. The Low Town, at the foot of the hill, was occupied by the houses and shops of merchants, by private residences, and the humbler dwellings of sailors, artisans and poor folk. In the earliest days the High Town, or Haute Ville, alone existed; for Nice was then a settlement on an isolated hill as difficult of access as Monaco. In the fifteenth century the castle was represented only by the old keep or donjon, a structure, no doubt, massive enough but not adapted for other than a small garrison. It was Nicode de Menthon who enlarged the fortress of Nice and greatly increased the defences of the town during the century named.

As years progressed the military needs of the time caused the High Town, as a place of habitation, to cease to

<sup>1</sup> "La Province des Alpes Maritimes," 1902.

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

exist ; for the whole of the top of the hill was given up to fortifications, bastions, gun emplacements, magazines, armouries and barracks. It is said by Bosio that the private houses and public buildings within the walls of the High Town were abandoned in 1518 to be replaced by the military works just named. The whole of these works were finally levelled to the ground in the year 1706 by order of Louis XIV.

The Low Town, *la Ville Basse*, was bounded on the south by the sea, on the east by the Castle Hill, and on the west by a line running from the shore to the Paillon and roughly represented in position and direction by the present Rue de la Terrasse. To the north the town extended as far as the Boulevard du Pont Vieux. The town was surrounded by ramparts and bastions. On the ruins of the bastions Sincaire and Païroliera the Place Victor<sup>1</sup> (now the Place Garibaldi) was constructed in 1780. The position of the two bastions on the north is indicated roughly by the present Rue Sincaire and Rue Païrolliere. On one side of the Rue Sincaire there still stands, against the flank of the hill, a solid and lofty mass of masonry which is a relic of the defences of old days.

There were four gates to the old town, *Porte de la Marine*, *Porte St. Eloi*, *Porte St. Antoine*, and the *Païroliera Gate*. The *St. Eloi* and the *Païroliera* gates were broken down during the great siege of 1543, and the others have since been cleared away. Of these various gates that of *St. Antoine* was the most important. It was at this gate that criminals were pilloried. A faint trace of the old walls is still to be seen near the end of the Fish Market.

<sup>1</sup> So named after King Victor Amadeus III of Sardinia.

## Nice : The Old Town

The Bellanda Tower was built in 1517 by de Bellegarde, the then Governor of Nice. It served to protect the city from the sea. The tower now exists as a low round work which has been incorporated in the grounds of an hotel and converted into a "belvedere." It might, however, be readily mistaken for a stone water-tank. There was another tower, called the Malavicina, which was constructed to defend the town upon the land side ; but of this erection no trace remains. A little suburb, or small borough, existed just outside the old town and on the other side of the river. It was called St. Jean Baptiste, and was connected with the town by a bridge in front of the St. Antoine Gate. Its position is indicated by the present Quai St. Jean Baptiste.

The old town of Nice is small and well circumscribed. It occupies a damp and dingy corner at the foot of the Castle Hill. It seems as if it had been pushed into this corner by the over-assertive new town. Its lanes are so compressed and its houses, by comparison, so tall that it gives the idea of having been squeezed and one may imagine that with a little more force the houses on the two sides of a street would touch. It is traversed from end to end by an alley called the Rue Droite. This was the Oxford Street of the ancient city. A series of narrower lanes cross the Rue Droite ; those on one side mount uphill towards the castle rock, those on the other incline towards the river.

The lanes are dark, dirty and dissolute-looking. The town is such a one as Gustave Doré loved to depict or such as would be fitting to the tales of Rabelais. One hardly expects to find it peopled by modern mechanics, tram conductors, newspaper boys and honest housewives ; nor do

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

electric lights seem to be in keeping with the place. Its furtive ways would be better suited to men in cloaks and slouched hats carrying rapiers, and at night to muffled folk groping about with lanterns. One expects rather to see quaint signboards swinging over shops and women with strange headgear looking out of lattice windows. In the place of all this is modern respectability—the bowler hat, the stiff collar and the gramophone.

The only thing that has not changed is the smell. It may be fainter than it was, but it must be centuries old. It is a complex smell—a mingling of cheese and stale wine, of salt fish and bad health, a mouldy and melancholy smell that is hard to bear even though it be so very old. The ancient practice of throwing all refuse into the street has drawbacks, but it at least lacks the insincere delicacy of the modern dustbin.

Strange and interesting industries are carried on in doorways and on the footpath. Intimate affairs of domestic life are pursued with unblushing frankness in the open and with a singular absence of restraint. Each street, besides being a public way, is also a laundry, a play-room for children and a fowl run.

The houses are of no particular interest, for, with a few exceptions, they have been monotonously modernised. The lanes are so pinched that the dwellings are hard to see as a whole. If the visitor throws back his head and looks in the direction in which he believes the sky to be, he will be aware of dingy walls in blurred tints of pink or yellow, grey or blue with green sun-shutters which are swinging open at all angles. From any one of the windows may protrude a mattress—like a white or red tongue—or a pole may appear from which hang clothes to dry, or, more

## Nice : The Old Town

commonly still, a female head will project. Women talk to one another from windows all day long. Indeed, social intercourse in old Nice is largely conducted from windows. If one looks along a lane, these dark heads projecting at various levels from the houses are like hobnails on the sole of a boot. The sun-shutters, it may be explained, are not for the purpose of keeping out the sun, but serve as a protection from the far more piercing ray of the neighbour's eye.

A picturesque street is the Rue du Malonat. It mounts up to the foot of the Castle Hill by wide, low steps like those on a mule path. Poor as the street may be, there is in it an old stone doorway, finely carved, which is of no little dignity. At the bottom of the lane is a corner house with three windows furnished with grilles. This is said to have been at one time the residence of the Governor of Nice. The house in the Rue de la Préfecture (No. 20) where Paganini died is featureless but for its old stone entry, and its ground floor has become a shop where knitted goods are sold.<sup>1</sup>

In the Rue Droite (No. 15) is an amazing house which one would never expect to find in a mean street. It is the palace of the great Lascaris family. Theodore Lascaris, the founder of the family, is said to have been driven from his Byzantine throne in 1261 and to have taken refuge in Nice. There he built himself a palace. It could not have been erected in the Rue Droite, as so many writers repeat, since the Lower Town as a retreat for ex-emperors, had no existence at this period. The descendants of the exile, however, continued to live in Nice for some centuries, and

<sup>1</sup> The strange wanderings of Paganini after death are dealt with in the account of Villefranche (page 114)

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the present building dates, with little doubt, from the early part of the seventeenth century.

The street is so narrow that it is difficult to appreciate the fine façade of this palace ; but by assuming the attitude of a star-gazer it is possible to see that the great house of four stories would look illustrious even in Piccadilly. It has a very finely carved stone doorway which leads into a vaulted hall. In the road outside the door are heaps of vegetable refuse, a pyramid of mouldy lemons and a pile of pea husks. From the upper windows hang bedding and clothes to dry. It is quite evident that the exposed garments do not belong to the family of an ex-emperor. On the main floor, or *piano nobile*, are seven large and ornate windows, each provided with a balcony.

From the hall a stone staircase ascends in many flights. It has a vaulted ceiling, supported by large stone columns. On the wall are niches containing busts of indefinite men and some elaborate work in plaster. The staircase on one side is open to a well all the way and so the lights and shadows that cross it are very fascinating. Still more fascinating is it to recall for a moment the people who have passed up and down the stair and upon whom these lights and shadows have fallen during the last three hundred years. Among them would be the old count on his way to the justice room, the faltering bride whose hand has rested on this very balustrade, the tired child crawling up to bed with a frightened glance at the fearsome busts upon the wall.<sup>1</sup>

The rooms on the *piano nobile* have domed ceilings, which are either covered with frescoes or are richly orna-

<sup>1</sup> A good photograph of this staircase will be found in Mr. Loveland's "Romance of Nice," page 146.



NICE: RUE DU SENAT.





## Nice: The Old Town

mented by plaster work. There is a great display on the walls of gilt panelling and bold mouldings. The rooms are dark and empty and so dirty that they have apparently not been cleaned since the Lascaris family took their departure. Apart from the filth and the neglect the place provides a vivid realisation of the town house of a nobleman of Nice in the olden days.

A stroll through the town will reveal many reminiscences of the past, which, although trivial enough, are still very pleasant to come upon amidst squalid surroundings. For instance over the doorway of a house in the Rue Centrale are carved, in a very boyish fashion, the letters I.H.S. with beneath them the sacred heart, the date 1648 and the initials of the owner of the building. Then again in the Rue Droite (No. 1), high up on the plain, deadly-modern wall of a wine-shop, is one very exquisite little window whose three arches are supported by two graceful columns. It is as unexpected as a plaque by Della Robbia on the outside of a gasometer.

There are several churches in the old town but they cannot claim to be notable. The cathedral of Sainte Réparate stands in an obscure and meagre square. It became a cathedral in 1531 but was reconstructed in 1737 and its interior "restored" in 1901. Outside it is quite mediocre, but within it is so ablaze with crude colours, so laden with extravagant and restless ornament, so profuse in its fussy and irritating decoration that it is not, in any sense, a sanctuary of peace. The old town hall of Nice in the Place St. François is a small, simple building in the Renaissance style which can claim to be worthy of the Nice that was.

There are two objects outside the old town which the

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

visitor will assuredly see—the Pont Vieux and the Croix de Marbre. The former which dates from 1531 is a weary-looking old bridge of three arches, worn and patched. Any charm it may have possessed is destroyed by the uncouth structure of wood and iron which serves to widen its narrow mediæval way. The cross stands in the district once occupied by the convent of Sainte Croix which was destroyed during the siege of 1543. The monument serves to commemorate the meeting of peace held in 1538 by Pope Paul III, François I and the Emperor Charles V. The cross, which is very simple, rises under a canopy of old, grey stone, supported by pillars with very primitive capitals. The cross was hidden away during the Revolution but was replaced in 1806 by the then Countess de Villeneuve. The venerable monument, standing as it does in a busy street through which the tramcars rumble, looks singularly forlorn and out of place.

The Castle Hill is now merely a wooded height which has been converted into a quite delightful public park. Among the forest of trees are many remains of the ancient citadel, masses of tumbled masonry, a half-buried arch or a stone doorway. There are indications also of the foundations of the old cathedral. The view from the platform on the summit is very fine, while at the foot are the jumbled roofs of old Nice. It is easy to appreciate how strong a fortress it was and how it proved to be impregnable to the forces of Barbarossa in the siege of 1543. It is a hill with a great history, illumined with great memories, but these are not encouraged by the stall for postcards and the refreshment bar which now occupy the place of the old donjon.

## V

### THE SIEGE OF NICE

NICE, as has been already stated, was many times besieged. If there be a condition among towns that may be called "the siege habit" then Nice had acquired it. The most memorable assault upon the place was in 1543. It was so gallant an affair that it is always referred to as *the* siege of Nice.

It was an incident of the war between Charles V and François I, King of France. A treaty had been entered into between these two sovereigns which is commemorated to this day by the Croix de Marbre in the Rue de France. Charles V thought fit to regard this obligation as "a scrap of paper" and declared war upon the French king. The French at once started to attack Nice which was conveniently near to the frontier and at the same time an important stronghold of the enemy.

Now in these days business entered largely into the practical affairs of warfare. A combatant must obviously have a fighting force. If he possessed an inadequate army he must take means to supplement it. He must hire an army on the best terms he could and in accord with the hire-system arrangement of the time. Professional warriors were numerous enough and were as eager for a temporary engagement as are "supers" at a pantomime.

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They could not be obtained through what would now be called a Registry Office; but there were contractors or war-employment agents who could supply the men *en masse*.

François I, when the war began, found himself very ill provided with fighting men and especially with seamen and ships, for Nice was a port. He naturally, therefore, applied to the nearest provider of war material and was able to secure no less a man than Barbarossa the pirate.

It is necessary to speak more fully about this talented man; for in all popular accounts of the great siege of Nice two persons alone are pre-eminent; two alone occupy the stage—a pirate and a laundress, Barbarossa and Segurana. Hariadan Barbarossa was a pirate by profession, or as some would style him who prefer the term, a corsair. His sphere of activity was the Mediterranean and especially the shores of Africa. He had done extremely well and, as the result of diligent robbery with violence pursued for many years, he had acquired territory in Tunis where he reigned as a kind of caliph. He was not a Moor nor was he black. He was a native of Mitylene. The name Barbarossa, or Redbeard, had been given him apparently in part on account of his hair and in part from the fact that his real name was unpronounceable. His exploits attracted the attention of the Sultan of Turkey who was so impressed with his ability that he took him into his service and made him Grand Admiral of the Ottoman fleet. It was, therefore, with Turkish ships and with Turkish men that Barbarossa came to the aid of the King of France.

The leader of the French troops was the Comte de

## The Siege of Nice

Grignan. He seems, however, to have been a person of small importance. Barbarossa was the commanding figure, the leader and the hero of the drama.

The governor of Nice was a grey-headed warrior, one Andrea Odinet, Count of Montfort. Barbarossa commenced operations on August 9th but before his attack was delivered he sent a formal message to the governor demanding the surrender of the town. The governor replied enigmatically that his name was Montfort. Barbarossa probably perceived that the name was appropriate, for the hill held by the enemy was strong. He further informed the pirate that his family motto was "Bisogno tenere," which may be rendered "I am bound to hold on." Having furnished these biographical details he suggested that the Turkish admiral had a little more to do than he could manage.

The position of the town, with its walls, its bastions and its gates, has been already set forth in the preceding chapter. The main assault was made on the north side of Nice, the special object of attack being the Païroliera bastion which faced the spot now occupied by the Place Garibaldi. The batteries opened fire and poured no fewer than three hundred shots a day upon the unhappy city. This cannonade was supplemented by that of one hundred and twenty galleys which were anchored off the foot of Mont Boron.

By August 15th a breach was made in the Païroliera bastion, and the Turks and the French moved together to the assault. They were thrown back with fury. They renewed the attack, but were again repulsed and on the third violent onrush were once more hurled back. At last, wearied and disheartened, they retired, having lost

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

heavily in men and having suffered the capture of three standards.

The poor, battered town of Nice, with its small garrison, could not however endure for long the incessant rain of cannon balls, the anxiety, the perpetual vigil and the bursts of fighting; so after eleven days of siege the lower town capitulated, leaving the *haute ville*, or Castle Hill, still untaken.

Barbarossa appears to have dealt with that part of the city which he had captured in quite the accepted pirate fashion and with great heartiness. He destroyed as much of it as his limited leisure would permit, let loose his shrieking Turks to run riot in the streets, set fire to the houses and took away three thousand inhabitants as slaves. Barbarossa—whatever his faults—was thorough.

There yet remained the problem of the upper town on the Castle Hill. It was unshaken, untouched and as defiant as the precipice on which it stood; while over the tower of the keep the banner of Nice floated lazily in the breeze as if it heralded an autumn fête day. The Turkish batteries thundered not against walls and bastions but against a solid and indifferent rock. To scale the side of the cliff was not within the power of man. The garrison on the height had little to do but wait and count the cannon balls which smashed against the stone with as little effect as eggshells against a block of iron.

The view is generally accepted that little is to be gained by knocking one's head against a stone wall. The general in command of the French was becoming impressed with this opinion and was driven to adopt



NICE: A STREET IN THE OLD TOWN.





## The Siege of Nice

another and more effective method of destroying Nice. In his camp were certain traitors, deserters and spies who had sold themselves, body and soul, to the attacking army. Conspicuous among these was Gaspard de Caïs (of whom more will be heard in the telling of the siege of Eze), Boniface Ceva and a scoundrel of particular baseness named Benoit Grimaldo, otherwise Oliva. These mean rogues assured the French general that Nice could be taken by treachery. They had co-conspirators in the town who were anxious to help in destroying the place of their birth and were masters of a plan which could not fail. Three Savoyard deserters offered their services as guides; and one day, as the twilight was gathering, Benoit Grimaldo, the three guides, and a party of armed men started out cheerfully for the Castle Hill. On gaining access to the town they were to make way for the body of the troops. The French to a man watched the hill for the signal that would tell that the impregnable fortress had been entered and, with arms in hand, were ready to spring forward to victory.

Unfortunately one of the deserters had a conscience. His conscience was so disturbed by qualms that the man was compelled to sneak to his colonel and "tell him all." It thus came to pass that Benoit and his creeping company were met by a sudden fusillade which killed many of them. The survivors fled. Grimaldo jumped into the sea and saved himself by swimming. Later on—it may be mentioned—he was taken by some of his old comrades of the Castle Hill and was hanged within sight of his own home.

In this way did the siege of Nice come to an end, leaving the city untaken and the flag still floating over

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

the gallant height; while the discomfited pirate sailed away for other fields of usefulness.<sup>1</sup>

It is necessary now to turn to the case of the laundress who shared with Barbarossa the more dramatic glories of the siege. She is said, in general terms, "to have fought valiantly and to have inspired the defenders by her example." As to her exact deeds of valour there is some obscurity in matters of detail and some conflict of evidence as to the scope and purpose of her military efforts. If her capacity for destroying Turks may be measured by the capacity of the modern laundress for destroying linen she must have been an exceedingly formidable personage. The story, as given by Baring-Gould, is as follows: <sup>2</sup>

"Catherine Segurane, a washerwoman, was carrying provisions on the wall to some of the defenders when she saw that the Turks had put up a scaling ladder and that a captain was leading the party and had reached the parapet. She rushed at him, beat him on the head with her washing bat and thrust him down the ladder which fell with all those on it. Then hastening to the nearest group of Nicois soldiers she told them what she had done, and they, electrified by her example, threw open a postern, made a sortie, and drove the Turks back to the shore."

Apart from the fact that the picture of a washerwoman strolling about in the firing line with a laundry implement in her hand is hard to realise, it must be added that certain French accounts and the story of Ricotti differ materially from the narrative given. Ricotti speaks of Segurana as a poor lady of Nice, aged thirty-seven, who

<sup>1</sup> Nostredame, "History of Provence," 1614. Durante's "History of Nice," 1823. Vol. II. Ricotti, "Storia della monarchia piemontese," 1861. Vol. I.

<sup>2</sup> "Riviera," by S. Baring-Gould, 1905.

## The Siege of Nice

was so ill-looking that she went by the nickname of Donna Maufaccia or Malfatta which may be rendered as Madame Ugly Face. She is said to have been possessed of rare strength, to have been masculine in bearing and *ingrate* or unpleasing in her general aspect. She is described as having performed some feat of strength with a Turkish standard that she had seized with her own hands. According to one account she threw the standard into the moat and according to another she planted it upside down on the top of Castle Hill—a somewhat childish display of swagger.

From the rather ridiculous elements furnished by the various records a composite story comes together which is as full of charm as a beautiful allegory. It tells of no Joan of Arc with her youth, her handsome face, her graceful carriage, her shining armour and her powerful friends. It tells of a woman in a lowly position who was no longer young, who was ugly and, indeed, unpleasant to look upon, who was the butt of her neighbours and was branded with a cruel nickname by her own townfolk. When the city was attacked and in the travail of despair this despised woman, this creature to laugh at, came to the front, fought with noble courage by the side of the men, shared their dangers and displayed so fine and so daring a spirit that she put heart into a despairing garrison, put life into a drooping cause and made victorious what had been but a forlorn hope. It was the fire and patriotism and high resolve that she aroused that saved the city she loved and earned for her the name, for all time, of the Heroine of Nice. Poor Madame Ugly Face the butt of the town!

## VI

### CIMIEZ AND ST. PONS

**B**EHIND the city of Nice rises the well known hill of Cimiez, on the gentle slope of which stand the great hotels. On the summit of the hill was the Roman town of Cemenelum, which is said to have numbered 30,000 inhabitants and which was at the height of its glory before Nice itself came into being. Through Cemenelum passed the great Roman road which ran from the Forum of Rome to Arles. It approached Cimiez from Laghet and La Trinité-Victor and traces of it are still indicated in this fashionable colony of gigantic hotels and resplendent villas.

Few remains of the Roman settlement are now to be seen; for the Lombards in the sixth century did their best to destroy it and after their cyclonic passage the town became little more than a quarry for stones. In the grounds of the Villa Garin is a structure of some size which is assumed by the learned to have been part of a temple of Apollo, together with minor fragments of walls which are claimed to have belonged to the Thermæ.

The most important ruin in Cimiez is that of the amphitheatre. It is a mere shell, but its general disposition is very clear. In addition to a lower tier of seats there are remains of the upper rows which are supported, as in the Coliseum, on arches. The vaulted porch at the



CIMIEZ : THE ROMAN AMPHITHEATRE.



## Cimiez and St. Pons

main entrance is in singular preservation. The arena measures 150 feet in one axis and 115 feet in the other. It is, therefore, small and in the form of a broad oval. A great deal of the structure is buried in the ground, so that it is estimated that the original floor of the arena lies at least ten feet below the existing surface. The ruins, much overgrown with grass and brambles, have an aspect of utter desolation. It is said that the natives call the spot *il tino delle fate*, or the fairies' bath. If this be so there is assuredly more sarcasm in the conceit than poetic merit, for the sorry parched-up ruin would better serve as a penitentiary for ghosts. Through the centre of the amphitheatre passed at one time the road from Cimiez to Nice. It is now closed and the present road, with its tram lines, runs outside the walls of the venerable building.

Near the amphitheatre and on the crest of the hill is the monastery of St. Francis of Assisi. It lies in a modest square, shaded by old ilex trees. At one end of the square is the cross of Cimiez. It stands aloft on a twisted column of marble. Upon the cross is carved the six-winged seraph which appeared to St. Francis in a vision. This marvellous work of art dates from the year 1477. The cross, like the column, is all white and, standing up as it does against the deep green background of a solemn elm, it forms an object of impressive beauty. Crosses in the open are to be found throughout the whole of France, but there is no cross that can compare with this.

The monastery was founded in 1543. The façade of the chapel, with its bell towers on either side and its central gable over a pointed window, is very simple. It

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

is rather spoiled by a heavy arcade which, being recently restored is harsh and crude. The interior of the chapel is gracious and full of charm. It consists of a square nave flanked by narrow aisles. The roof, vaulted and groined, is decorated with frescoes and is supported by square columns of great size. At the far end, in a deep and dim recess, is the altar. This chancel is cut off from the church by a balustrade of white marble. Behind the altar is a high screen of daintily carved wood, gilded and relieved by three niches. It is a work of the sixteenth century.

Many churches offend by lavish and obtrusive ornament, by glaring colours, by reckless splashes of bright gold, by excessive detail, all of which give a sense of restlessness and discord. Such churches may not unfitly be spoken of as "loud." If that term be appropriate, then this little shrine may be described as the chapel of a whisper. Its fascination lies in its exquisite and tender colouring which conveys a sense of supreme quietude and peace. It is difficult to say of what its colouring consists for it is so delicate and so subdued. There is a gentle impression of faint tints, of the lightest coral pink, of white, of grey, of a hazy blue. The general effect is that of a piece of old brocade, the colours of which are so faded and so soft that all details of the pattern have been lost. The light in the church is that of summer twilight. The altar is almost lost in the shadow. The screen behind it is merely such a background of old gold as that upon which the face of a saint was painted in the early days of art. The marble rail is a line of white and in the gloom of the chancel is the light of one tiny red lamp—a mere still spark.



## Cimiez and St. Pons

In two of the side chapels are paintings by Ludovici Bréa of Nice of about the year 1512. By the side of the church is the monastery which is now deserted. A corridor leads to a little courtyard, with a well in the centre, and around it a plain white-walled cloister. Beyond this is an enclosed garden shut in also by a cloister of pale arches in the shadows of which are the doors of the monastery cells. The garden is in a state of utter neglect; but in it still flourish palms and bamboos, orange trees and a few despondent flowers.

That side of the hill of Cimiez which looks towards the east is somewhat steep, and the zigzag road which traverses it leads down to the broad, open valley of the Paillon river. Near the foot of the hill and on a little promontory just above the level floor of the valley stands the Abbey of St. Pons. The name, St. Pons, is given to the district around which forms a scattered suburb of Nice. The place is still green, for it abounds with gardens and orange groves; but it is being "developed" and is becoming a semi-industrial quarter, very devoid of attraction. There are factories in St. Pons, together with workshops and depressing houses, a tram line and—across the river—a desert of railway sidings. It possesses many cafés which, on the strength of a few orange trees, a palm or two and an arbour, make a meretricious claim to be rural. From all these objects the abbey is happily removed; but its position is neither so romantic nor so picturesque as its past history would suggest.

The present abbey church is a drab, uninteresting building with a prominent tower. It was built about the end of the sixteenth century. The monastery is occupied by an asylum for the insane. The Abbey of St. Pons is

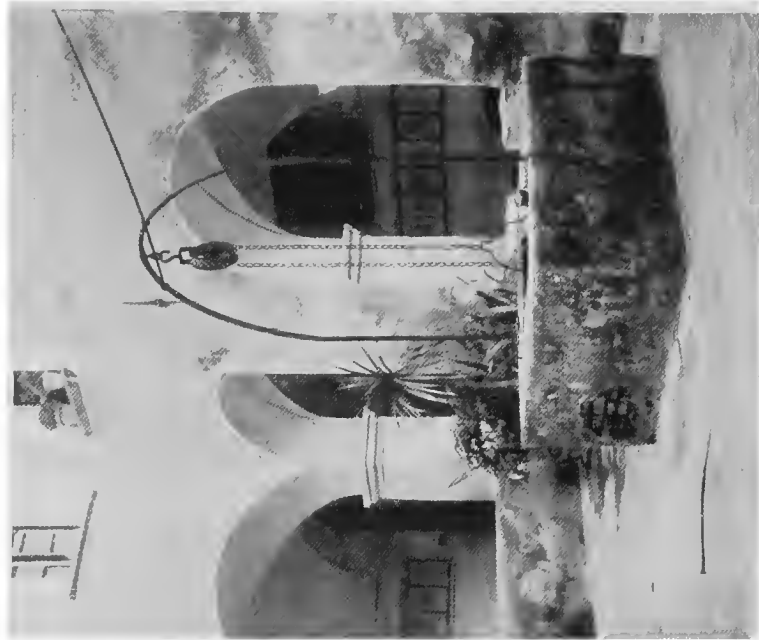
## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

of great antiquity, since it dates from the eighth century and it is claimed that Charlemagne sojourned there on two occasions. It stands on the site of ancient Roman buildings, for numerous remains of that period have been unearthed, among which are an altar to Apollo, many sarcophagi and some inscribed stones.

There was also a convent at St. Pons long centuries ago. Its precise position is a matter of doubt; for, so far as I can ascertain, no trace of the building can now be pointed out with assurance. In the history of St. Pons this convent plays a conspicuous, if momentary part. The episode is deplorable for it concerns the dramatic circumstances under which the convent came to an end.



CIMIEZ : THE MARBLE CROSS.



CIMIEZ: THE MONASTERY WELL.



## VII

### HOW THE CONVENT OF ST. PONS CAME TO AN END

ON a kindly afternoon in St. Martin's summer, when the shadows were lengthening and the beech woods were carpeted with copper and gold, a party of gallants were making their way back to Nice after a day's ramble among the hills. It was in the year 1408, when this poor worried world was still young and thoughtless. They were strolling idly down the valley of St. Pons, loath to return to their cramped, dull palaces on the Castle Hill, when a storm began to rumble up from the south and the sky to become black and threatening. Slashed doublets and silken hose and caps of miniver are soon made mean by the rain; so the question arose as to a place of shelter.

At the moment when the first large ominous drops were falling the little party chanced to be near by the convent of St. Pons. It is a bold thing for a company of gay young men to approach a retreat of nuns; but the wind was already howling, the blast was chill and these youths were bold. The door was opened, not by an austere creature with a repellent frown, but by a comely serving sister of joyous countenance. The youths, adopting that abject humility which men assume when they find themselves where they ought not to be, begged meekly for shelter from the rain. Without demur and, indeed,

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with effusion the fair janitor bade them welcome and asked them to come in. The young men, whose faces until now were solemn, as was befitting to a sacred place, began to smile and to appear normal. The serving sister, with a winning curtesy, said she would call the abbess.

At this announcement the smile vanished from the lips of the refugees. An abbess was a terrible and awe-inspiring thing, something that was stout and red, imperious and chilling, inclined to wrath and very severe in all matters relating to young men. A few turned as if to make for the outer door; while one—who had held an outpost in a siege—whispered to his friend “Now we are in for it!” After a period of acute suspense an inner door opened and the abbess appeared. She was stout, it is true; but it was a very comfortable, embrace-inviting stoutness. She was red; but it was the ruddy glow of a ripe apple. Her face was sunny, her mouth smiling and her manner warm. In age she was just past the meridian. She was, indeed, the embodiment of St. Martin’s summer.

She greeted the new-comers with heartiness; laughed at their timidity; asked them what they were frightened at and told them, with no conventual restraint, that she was delighted to see them. When one mumbled something about being driven in by the rain she said, with a coy glance at her guests, that rain was much wanted just then about the convent. She put them at their ease. She chattered and warbled as one who loves to talk. Her voice rippled through the solemn hall like the song of a full-breasted thrush. She asked them their names and what they were doing. She wanted to hear the lighter

## How the Convent of St. Pons Ended

gossip of Castle Hill and to be told of the scrapes in which they were involved and of the bearing of their lady loves. She twitted a handsome knight upon his good looks and caused a shy seigneur to stammer till he blushed.

It must not be supposed that she was an ordinary abbess or a type of the reverend lady who should control the lives and mould the conduct of quiet nuns. Indeed the recorder of this chronicle viewed her with disapproval and applied harsh terms to her; for in his description of this merry, fun-loving and comfortable person he uses such disagreeable expressions as *mondaine* and *bonne viveuse*.<sup>1</sup>

As the rain was still beating on the convent roofs and as the young men had travelled far the abbess invited them into the refectory, a white, hollow room with bare table and stiff chairs. Here wine was placed before them, of rare quality and in copious amount; while—sad as it may be to tell the truth—nuns began to sidle timidly into the room, one by one. Whatever might be the comment the fact cannot be concealed that the grim refectory was soon buzzing with as merry a company as ever came together and one very unusual within the walls of a convent.

The time was drawing near for the evening service. Whether the abbess invited the young men to join in the devotions proper to the house, or whether the young men, out of politeness, suggested that they should attend I am unable to state, for the historian is silent upon this point.

The service proceeded. The male members of the congregation were, I am afraid, inattentive. They were tired; they had passed through an emotional adventure

<sup>1</sup> "Legendes et Contes de Provence," by Martrin-Donos.

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and wine is soporific. They lolled in their seats; some rested their heads on the bench before them; some dozed; some even may have slept.

In a while the nuns began the singing of the "De Profundis" (Out of the Depths). As they sang one voice could be heard soaring above the rest, a voice clear and beautiful, vibrating with tenderness, with longing and with infinite pathos. The young men remained unmoved save one. This one, who had been lounging in a corner, suddenly awoke and was at once alert, startled and alarmed. He clutched the seat in front of him as if he would spring towards the spot whence the music came. His eyes, fixed on the choir, glared as the eyes of one who sees a ghost. His countenance bore the pallor of death. He trembled in every fibre of his body.

He knew the voice. It was to him the dearest in the world. It was a voice from "out of the depths," for it belonged to one whom he believed to be dead. He could not see the singer; but he could see, as in a dream, the vision of a piteous face, a face with eyes as blue as a summer lake, with lips whimsical, tantalising and ineffable; could see the tender cheek, the chin, the white forehead, the waving hair. He knew that she who sang was no other than Blanche d'Entrevannes, whom he had loved and to whom he was still devoted.

But a few years past he had held her in his arms, had kissed those lips, and had thrilled to the magic of that voice. Her father had frowned upon their hopes and had forbidden their union. The lad had been called away to the wars. When he returned he had sought her out and was told that "she is dead." He haunted every spot



## How the Convent of St. Pons Ended

where they had wandered together, only to learn the truth that "no place is so forlorn as that where *she* has been," and only to hear again that she was dead.

Blanche was not dead, but, believing their case to be hopeless, she had entered the convent of St. Pons and, in a few days' time, would take the veil.

After the service the youth—whose name was Raimbaud de Trechts—disappeared to find the singer at any cost. The search was difficult. At last he met a sympathetic maid who said that Blanche d'Entrevannes was indeed a novice in the convent and who, with little pressing, agreed to convey a message to her. The message was short. It told that he was there and begged her to fly with him that night. The answer that the maid brought back was briefer still, for it was a message of two words—"I come."

The rain continued to pour, the harsh wind blew and the gallant knights were still in need of shelter. How they spent the night and how they were disposed of I do not know, for the strict narrative avoids all reference to that matter.

By the morning the storm had passed away and as the sun broke out the young men reluctantly prepared to take their leave. The abbess would not allow them to go without one final ceremony. They must all drink the stirrup cup together, "to speed the parting guest," as was the custom of the time. It was an hilarious ceremony and one pleasant to look upon. In the road before the convent gate stood the cheery abbess in the light of the unflinching day. In her hand she raised a brimming goblet and her sleeve falling back revealed a white and comely arm. Around her was a smiling company of

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young men whose many-coloured costumes lit up the dull road and the old grey-tinted rocks. Behind her were the nuns in a semicircle of sober brown, giggling and chatting, nudging one another and a little anxious about their looks in the merciless morning light. It was a noisy gathering but very picturesque; for the scarlet and blue of the knights' doublets and the glint of steel made a pretty contrast with the row of white faces in white coifs and the cluster of dark-coloured gowns. It was like a bunch of flowers in an earthenware bowl.

The abbess, beaming as the morning, was about to speak when something terrible came to pass. There appeared in the road the most dread-inspiring thing that the company of knights and nuns could have feared to see. It was not a lion nor was it a dragon. It was a bishop. It was not one of those fat, smiling bishops with flabby cheeks and ample girth, whose loose mouth breathes benevolence and whose hands love to pat curly heads and trifle with pretty chins. It was a thin bishop with a face like parchment and the visage of a hawk. He was frenzied with rage. He stamped and shrieked. He foamed at the mouth. His arm seemed raised to strike, his teeth to bite.

A word must here be said to explain how it was that the prelate had "dropped in" at this singularly unfortunate moment, since bishops are not usually wandering about in valleys at an early hour on November mornings. It came about in this way. The old almoner of the place, alarmed and horrified at the conduct of the abbess and the irreverent and indeed ribald "goings-on" at this religious house, had hurried during the night to the bishop and had given him an insight into convent life as lived

## How the Convent of St. Pons Ended

at St. Pons. He begged the bishop to do something, and this the bishop did.

The arrival of the prelate at the convent gate had the effect of a sudden thunder-clap on a clear day. The abbess dropped her cup ; the knights doffed their caps ; the maids, peeping behind corners, fell out of sight ; while the nuns stood petrified like a row of brown stones.

The great cleric screamed out his condemnation of the abbess, of the nuns, of the convent and of everything that was in it. He shrieked until he became inarticulate and until his voice had sunk to a venomous whisper like the hiss of a snake. He dismissed the young gallants with a speech that would have withered a worm. Turning to the women he said even more horrid things. He expelled the abbess and the nuns from St. Pons and ordered them to repair at once to the convent of St. Pierre d'Almanarre near Hyères, a convent notable for the severity of its rules. Here, as the historian says, they would be able "to expiate their sins with austerities to which they had long been strangers."

It was in this way that the convent of St. Pons came to an end ; for the desecrated building was never occupied from that day. No nun ever again paced its quiet courtyard ; no pigeons came fluttering to the sister's hand nor did the passer-by hear again the sound of women singing in the small grey chapel. In the course of centuries the building fell into ruin and, year by year, the scandalised walls crumbled away, while tender rosemary and chiding brambles crept over the place to cover its shame.

On this eventful morning the bishop's efforts did not end when he had sentenced the lady abbess and had

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swept the convent from the earth. He proceeded, before he left, to pronounce over the assembly the anathema of the Church. He cursed them all from the abbess standing with bowed head to the scullion gaping from the kitchen door. He cursed the nuns, the novices, the lay helpers and the maids, and had there been a jackdaw in the building, as at Rheims, he would, no doubt, have included the bird in his anathema. So wide and so comprehensive a cursing, delivered before breakfast, had never before been known.

Two of the party—and two only—escaped the curse of the Church, Raimbaud de Trechts and Blanche d'Entrevannes. It was not until the morning, when the whole of the company were assembled about the convent gate, that the two were missed.

The historian, in his mercy, adds this note at the end of his narrative: "In the parish register of the village of Entrevannes, in the year 1408, there stands the record of the marriage of the chevalier Raimbaud de Trechts to the noble lady Blanche d'Entrevannes."

## VIII

### VENCE, THE DEFENDER OF THE FAITH

**V**ENCE is a very ancient place with a history of some merit. It is said to have been, in its earliest days, the stronghold of a native tribe. Since it stands on a hill convenient in position this statement may probably be allowed. It had the usual infantile troubles of growing towns in this area. It was occupied in turn by the Phœnicians, Phocæans and Gauls, and was ravaged, in due course and in appropriate manner, by both Saracens and Lombards. It played but a minor part in those later turmoils which rent the rest of Provence, and was indifferently moved by the upheaval and the downfall of neighbouring principalities and powers. Vence, however, had concerns and troubles of its own, achievements to be proud of and dissensions to deplore; for it was, first and foremost, a religious town, and both its greatness and its trials had an origin in religion.

When the Romans came they established on this secluded spot an imperial city. It seems to have been not so much a military station as an outpost of the picturesque faith of Rome, a kind of Canterbury in the backwoods of Provence. They called the place Ventium, and some indication of its ancient boundaries can still be traced. It is known to the historian by its temples.

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How many of these buildings existed is a matter of doubt, but certain it is that the pious Roman, toiling up to Ventium from the coast, would see afar off, standing up against the hills, the white columns of the temples to Cybele and to Mars. Of these shrines no vestige now remains. The stones have been scattered and have become mere material in the mason's hands. Some have helped to build a Christian church, others to found a city wall or to give dignity to the house of a mediæval burgher.<sup>1</sup>

There are many Roman inscriptions still in Vence. They have been found in all sorts of odd places, on street walls, in gardens, in cellars, as well as on certain stones in the old church. From these fragments, as disjointed and as incongruous as the mutterings of a sleeping man, a broken history of Ventium, in the years before and just after Christ, has been pieced together.

The inscriptions are, in a general way, commemorative. There is one, for instance, to Lucius Veludius Valerianus, decurion of Vence, to record the fact that he had filled the functions both of magistrate and of priest. With his name is associated very prettily that of his wife Vibia, for she no doubt shared both his honours and his trials. Vibia, we may suppose, had left the gay and resplendent city of Rome to follow her adventurous husband into the wilds of Gaul, and was not a little proud of the position he had made in the lonely and solemn city. One might guess that it was Vibia who suggested the inscription. It is notable, moreover, that the most prominent word in the whole tablet and the one in the largest letters is UXORI (wife). Indeed, this word

<sup>1</sup> "Cathedrals and Cloisters of the South of France," by E. W. Rose.

## Vence, the Defender of the Faith

occupies an entire line to itself. It would seem as if Vibia wished to make it emphatic that she was a wife, and not otherwise.

If any of the inhabitants of the old town could come back to life again I should especially like to witness the meeting, in the main street, between Vibia and her successor in office, the mayoress of Vence of to-day. They would be a strange couple, strange in dress, in bearing and in speech, as odd as if a person wore on one foot a dainty Roman sandal and on the other an American boot. The two ladies would have, however, this in common—the country they gazed across would be as familiar to the one as to the other.

There is among the many writings in stone one which refers to the goddess Cybele and the ceremony of the Taurobolium. This pagan ceremony was both a sacrifice and an act of purification. Its symbolism is of interest when viewed in connection with that of the Christian church which directly followed upon the old faith. A bull was sacrificed to the goddess. The animal was placed upon a grating or latticed stage over a pit. In the pit crouched the penitent. The blood of the bull, as it poured over the body of the penitent, washed away all sin, all impurities and stains, and gave to the man thus made regenerate a new and holier life.<sup>1</sup>

Vence was at an early period converted to Christianity. The identity of the missionary who brought about this change is not clearly established; but the work is generally ascribed to St. Trophime. The body of St. Trophime lies in the old cathedral of Arles, in that church which

<sup>1</sup> "Voyages dans les Départements du Midi de la France," by A. L. Millin, 1808. "La Chorographie et l'histoire de Provence," by Honoré Bouche, 1664, p. 283.

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bears his name. Among the ruins of the abbey of Montmajour, near Arles, is his cell, a little rock sanctuary buried in the very bowels of the earth.

A bishopric was founded in Vence as early as 874. The city became a prominent and influential centre and its bishops were, with scarcely an exception, illustrious men. Most of these prelates are buried in the cathedral of the town. The tombs of two of the very earliest, viz. St. Veran and St. Lambert, occupy chapels in that sanctuary.

A famous ecclesiastic was Bishop Godeau. He was born in 1605 and took orders when he was thirty years old. He was a man of great learning and one of the founders of the French Academy. He was highly esteemed, not only by the people of Provence but also by the Papal Court and the counsellors of the king. "The epitaph of Bishop Godeau," writes Hare, "commemorates the favourite of Richelieu, who obtained his good graces by dedicating to him a paraphrase of the Psalms, which begins with the words '*Benedicite omnia opera Domini*,' on receiving which the powerful cardinal said, '*Monsieur l'Abbé, vous me donnez *Bènedicite*, et moi je vous donner *Grasse*.'*" The Pope afterwards allowed Godeau to hold the bishopric of Vence with that of Grasse."<sup>1</sup>

The worthy bishop died as he would have wished to die. In Holy Week in the year 1672 he was singing the Tenebræ before the altar of his cathedral of Vence.<sup>2</sup> The Tenebræ represent a very beautiful service of the Catholic Church. A candlestick bearing

<sup>1</sup> "The Rivièras," by Augustus J. Hare, 1897, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> "The Maritime Alps and their Seaboard," by Miss C. L. N. Dempster, 1885.





VENCE : THE EAST GATE AND OUTER WALL



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fifteen candles is placed in the sanctuary. These are lit when the service begins. At the end of each Psalm or Canticle one of the candles is extinguished to express the desertion of Our Lord by His apostles and disciples. At last only one candle remains. It signifies the Light of the World, and when it is taken down and placed behind the altar it serves to symbolise the burial of the Redeemer of Mankind. On the occasion of the celebration at Vence as the last candle was being extinguished the good bishop fell dead upon the altar steps.

Bishop Surian who succeeded to the see in 1727 had a somewhat romantic career. He began life as a shepherd boy. Finding this existence intolerable he ran away from home with the very inadequate sum of 35 sous in his pocket. Falling in with men who perceived his ability he was educated by them and admitted, in due course, to the priesthood. It is said that he lived as frugally when he was a bishop as he did when he was tending sheep on the hillside.

On the outbreak of the French Revolution, the bishop of Vence, Bishop Pisani, fled and joined that vast body of some 4,000 priests who left the country in order to avoid the penalties which the Revolution imposed. Pisani was the last bishop of Vence, for the see was never restored.

In early days Vence belonged to the bishops, the Church being the ruling power in the pious town. When Vence came into the possession of the Villeneuves—the lords of Villeneuve-Loubet—the seigniorial rights over Vence were divided between the bishopric and the Villeneuve family. The Villeneuves fled from France at the time of the Revolution and although they

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returned when the Terror had passed away it was only to rid themselves of their lands in Provence and seek a habitation elsewhere.

Vence being a devout town and one prominent in all ecclesiastical affairs it is no matter of surprise that it became deeply disturbed by the "new religion" as taught and stoutly maintained by the Huguenots. It is further no matter of surprise that the dissenters made this stronghold of the Church a special object of attack and that Vence became a conspicuous scene of their protestings.

The position assumed some gravity when the Huguenots did more than protest against forms of worship and took to arming themselves with weapons of war. They went further. They became clamorous and threatening and made it clear that they were no longer to be put off by mere academic arguments or quotations from the Fathers. Moreover this conflict between the Protestant and the Catholic involved certain political issues which were outside the burning questions of creed; and thus it was that men were drawn into the quarrel to whom matters of State were more important than matters of doctrine.

The trouble came to a head in 1560. The bishop at the time was a Grimaldi, while the castle of Villeneuve was possessed by his uncle, a Lascaris. On the Catholic side, therefore, Vence was solid and prepared to take prompt action to crush the revolt. A body of some three hundred men was raised to deal with the Huguenots, but, in spite of the all-pervading power of the Church there were Huguenots in Vence and the vicinity and they, in turn, raised men to support their

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cause. A Huguenot gentleman, with the pleasant name of René de Cypières, also collected a squadron of forty horse to help those who espoused the reformed faith.

Vence thus became in this fair area of France the Defender of the Faith. The governor of the town issued an order forbidding the citizens to harbour or conceal a Huguenot in any house, garden or vineyard. The bishop denounced the Protestants as "vagabonds and seditious men." What terms the Huguenots, on the other hand, applied to the bishop are not known, but they were certainly not lacking in invective for the contest was bitter.

Life in the cathedral town must have been very unpleasant about this period. So keen was the dispute that everyone must, of necessity, have taken sides. Friends broke from one another after an intimacy of a lifetime; lovers parted; the Catholic wife left the husband who had turned Huguenot; while families who were united by ties that had endured for generations now found themselves scowling at one another from opposite camps. Children were forbidden to speak to old playmates, and the little girl who had been so sweet to her boy friend now put out her tongue at him when they passed in the street.

In 1562 there seems to have been a lull in this unhappy quarrel and even a sign of tolerance, if not of peace; for the Huguenots, although forbidden the righteous city of Vence, were allowed to hold meetings without its walls.

The fire was, however, only smouldering. The truce was little more than a pretence. The quiet in the streets was ominous. Although the sun shone upon

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the faithful town a black cloud that betokened a storm was rising in the south. In 1582, with a rumble of thunder and a darkening sky, the tempest burst. A Huguenot army was advancing upon Vence.

It is necessary to pause here for a moment to record the fact that ten years before this time Vence was approached by a far more terrible and crafty enemy than the Huguenot; for in the year 1572 the army of the Black Death marched into the town. It crept through the open gates, for no one saw it. It set out to strangle and kill without remonstrance, for no one heard its footsteps. It spared neither the armed nor the helpless. It struck down the captain of the guard as he strutted on parade as well as the child who toddled up the cathedral steps to peep in at the door. It felled the lusty armourer at his forge and the maiden singing over her needlework.

As many as could flee from the town fled, including the bishop who sought refuge in St. Paul du Var. Grass grew in the empty streets, the silence of which was broken only by the rumble of a cart laden with dead and the tolling of a weary bell. The passer-by, with his cloak drawn over his face, slunk down a by-way when he saw another coming. The shops were closed; the market-place still, or traversed by a starving dog seeking his master whom he would never find. Here a door would be standing open, day after day, because the very last dweller in the house had crawled out into the street to die, while from an open window would hang the head of a woman whose last cry for help had been unheeded.

One would have supposed that this common disaster

## Vence, the Defender of the Faith

would have made for peace, but it only served to deepen the dissent; for the Catholics ascribed the visitation to the heresies of the Huguenots, while they, in turn, regarded the Black Death as a mission from God to punish the Church for its misdeeds.

The position of affairs when the war burst upon Vence in 1582 was as follows: That corner of Provence to the west which bordered on Marseilles, and which would be behind a line drawn—let us say—from Aix-en-Provence to Brignolles, was in the hands of the Church party. On the east the Duke of Savoy, with 2,000 men, was moving from the Italian frontier to the support of his friends at Marseilles. His concern in the conflict was based upon political rather than upon religious grounds. He was, in fact, taking advantage of the discord that raged on his borders. Between these two forces was the open country, in the centre of which was Vence.

Now the Huguenot army was advancing from the south, from the shelter of the Esterel mountains. It was led by a very remarkable man, by name Lesdiguières. He was young, brilliant, daring and ever victorious. Nothing could stand in his way; nothing, indeed, dared stand in his way, for his very name inspired terror.

He had two things to accomplish—one was to cut off the advancing army of the Duke of Savoy and prevent it from reaching Marseilles, and the other was to destroy the city of Vence, the outpost of Marseilles and the holder of the pass.

Vence stood alone in the way as the Defender of the Faith. It was the centre stone of the position. So long as Vence held it was well for those who were fighting

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

the battle of the Church. If the faithful city fell the outlook was unthinkable.

Lesdiguières the invincible appeared before Vence, surrounded it with his troops and his cannon and laid siege to it. It must have been a terrific conflict, for so much depended upon the issue, and the Vençois were well aware what would happen to them and their town if once the Huguenot captain got possession of the gates.

Beyond the fact that the loss on the side of the besiegers was very great, no details as to the actual storming of the city nor of the deeds of the defenders have survived. What is known is that the great adventure failed. The doughty Lesdiguières, hitherto invincible, raised the siege and retired again to the south beyond the Esterels.

Vence was saved, the prestige of the Church upheld, and a turn was given to events which can only be appreciated by imagining what would have been the history of Provence, and possibly of France, had the faithful city fallen.

Many of the Huguenot leaders and adherents rejoined the Church of Rome, old family feuds were forgotten, old friends shook hands again who had shunned one another for years, the Huguenot lover became Catholic and led his bride to the very altar he had fought to destroy. Even that hardy fighting man, the fierce, impetuous Lesdiguières, came back to the Church of Rome. He was, it is true, long in coming, for his reconciliation was not made until forty years had passed after the great failure of his life before the walls of Vence.





VENICE: THE CHURCH AND COURT OF BISHOP'S PALACE.



## IX

### VENCE, THE TOWN

**O**N the bend of a pleasant road some thirteen miles from Nice stands Vence, 1,065 feet above the level of the Mediterranean. It is a little place of about three thousand inhabitants, on the crown of a hill in a land of hills. Behind it rise precipitous heights which shield it from the north, while in front of it is an undulating country of pine wood and dale that rolls lazily to the sea. Vence consists of two parts, the old town and the new. The old town is a mere appendage to the new, and may be compared to an ancient reliquary attached to a gaudy piece of electro-plate in the modern taste.

The old town was entirely surrounded by ramparts built in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. On the summit of these was a broad way, where the defenders mustered when the town was attacked. Upon the northern front a considerable portion of the ancient ramparts still exists, while the terrace that capped them has become a modest promenade. Within and above the ramparts rose the town, like a castle of stone elliptical in shape. To the outer world it presented only a lofty and continuous wall, entered by certain gates, and strengthened here and there by towers. The wall represented the backs of the outer houses welded together in one unbroken barrier.

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The fronts of these houses looked into narrow streets, but the outer wall was blank and blind, being pierced only by a few small windows, high above the reach of attack, and by long, narrow, vertical slits as the ground was neared.

These ancient windows and these slits in the wall are still to be seen, but the *enceinte* has been broken in many places by casual windows of recent date and even by doors. Still, the walls of Vence—as viewed from the north of the town—have an aspect which has altered but little during the last four hundred years. They have aged, of course, but the gates are there and the towers still stand.

It is on the southern side of Vence that the hand of the town-improver has fallen most heavily, but even here the ruin wrought by “reconstruction” has not obliterated the ancient landmarks. The Boulevard Marcelin-Maurel, where the tramways run, follows the course of the southern ramparts. The wall on this side has been battered in to provide up-to-date houses and up-to-date shops, but yet the line of the old *enceinte* remains unshaken, for the hustling, irreverent tram is compelled to humbly follow the curve of the town wall as laid down six centuries ago.

On reaching Vence by the Nice road the first gate that is come upon is the Signadour Gate, which stands almost on the tram-lines. It is a gate of the fourteenth century, with a pointed arch, and it opens at the base of a rough, old tower. Some way to the right of it is the East Gate, which is much more ample, has a rounded arch, and passes directly through the outer wall into the mysterious shadows of the town. It is credited to the

## Vence, the Town

eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> At the opposite end of Vence is the Portail du Peyra, guarded by a very massive square tower of great height. The gate belongs to the days of the good King René, who died in 1480, and the tower to the seventeenth century. The gate has evidently been much restored and, indeed, reconstructed. It leads into the Place du Peyra, a quiet square shaded by a chestnut tree and charmed by the babble of a fountain in the form of a vase, from which issues four streams. The name of this ancient lounging place has been recently (and rather precipitately) changed to Place Wilson. A very picturesque little gate, called the Portail Levis, opens on to the ramparts towards the north. It has a pointed arch of the fourteenth century and a channel in the masonry for a portcullis. It leads into the Rue de la Coste, one of the oldest of the old lanes of the town. In the Boulevard Marcelin-Maurel (which, as already stated, is laid on the site of the mediæval ramparts) is a modern gate, with the date 1868. It has been driven through the houses which here form the *enceinte* of the town and opens almost directly into the church square.

The church at Vence has many peculiarities, not the least being the way in which it has hidden itself from the eyes of the world. It is so surrounded by parasitic buildings that nothing of it can be seen from the outside except a gable end, which projects fortuitously into another square. Indeed, the only outward and visible sign of the church is a door, surmounted by an image of the Virgin, jammed in between a café and a blank wall. The blank wall belongs to a seminary, one of the

<sup>1</sup> "Vence," by J. D., sold for the benefit of the Church and published at Vence in 1914. It is referred to in the text as "The Vence Handbook."

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buildings with which the church is encrusted. This building directly faces the new *mairie*, a very startling and effusive erection which stands where once stood a wing of the bishop's palace. Between the schoolhouse and the exuberant *mairie* are two dark, picturesque arches under a house. They represent what remains of the court of the palace, while the building above them is a part of the palace itself. The other side of this old house, having been left undisfigured, serves to show how stately a structure was this *évêché* of the fifteenth century.

Now, on that wall of the seminary which immediately faces the unblushing *mairie* will be found the Roman inscriptions to which reference has been made in the previous chapter (inscriptions dealing with the Taurobolium and with Valerianus and his wife Vibia). Here also are preserved certain carved tablets showing an interlacement of grapes and roses, mingled with confused birds; while above is a smaller stone on which is depicted an archaic eagle of doubtful anatomy. These carvings are generally described as Merovingian (A.D. 500-750), but the author of the Vence Handbook inclines to the view that they are Romano-Byzantine, and suggests that they may have belonged to a church that stood on this spot in the fifth century.

A Christian church of some kind has existed at Vence since the fourth century, for the first bishop of Vence, St. Eusebius, held office in the year 374. The present church dates from the tenth century, although that which now stands belongs to a period between the twelfth and the fifteenth. On entering the building there is at once a sense of being in a place of great antiquity. No church in this part of France conveys so striking an impression



VENCE : OLD HOUSE IN THE PLACE GODEAU.



VENCE : RUE DE LA COSTE.





## Vence, the Town

of old age. It is dark and crypt-like and, above all, primitive. On each side of the nave are immense square pillars supporting round arches. The pillars are without capitals and without a trace of ornament. There are two side aisles roofed over by a wide gallery which looks into the nave through the line of arches. The galleries were erected in the fifteenth century to accommodate an increasing congregation. On each side of these aisles is still another aisle, which is narrow and dark and in which are the chapels. The church, therefore, is represented by a nave and four aisles.

The side chapels are all old and beautifully decorated. One chapel contains the body of St. Veran, who died in 492. The tomb—which forms also the altar—is a Roman sarcophagus. It presents some mysterious carving which is thus described in the *Vence Handbook*: In the centre are the busts of a man and a young woman enclosed in a large sea-shell. Below is a bird and three naked children playing. The rest of the surface is occupied by the waves of the sea. It may be conjectured that it was the last resting-place of a lover of the sea, who would wish to sleep with the waves about him, with a bird in the blue and with children at play on the sand. The high altar is of marble of many colours and the tabernacle is surmounted by angels' heads in white. By the altar are the tombs of the Villeneuve's, the Lords of Vence.

The west end of the church presents a very large gallery or *tribune*, which was placed there at the close of the fifteenth century. Here are the famous choir stalls which were transferred from the choir at the same period. These stalls, fifty-one in number, are of dark oak and are most elaborately wrought. Besides much architectural

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

detail there are innumerable carvings of animals and plants, of human figures and of vague incidents. Some details, as the writer of the Handbook says, are serious, others are amusing, and a few are not “*très convenables*.” These exquisite stalls were the work of Jacques Bellot of Grasse. He commenced the work, according to Mr. Kaye,<sup>1</sup> in 1455, when he was twenty-five years of age, and completed it in 1495. He was, therefore, twenty-five when the work began and sixty-five when it was finished.

In this gallery also is a very fine lectern, which is claimed to be even an earlier work than the stalls. In one of the chapels of the church (the Chapelle des Saints-Anges) is the wondrously carved door of the *prévôté* or chapter house. This work is older than the stalls and is generally ascribed to the artist who fashioned the lectern. Certain Roman figures or statuettes are to be found in the church, one let into the pillar before the chapel of St. Veran, and another, that of a senator, in the wall between this chapel and that of the Sacred Heart.

Behind the church is a poor, distracted-looking square, once the cemetery, now the Place Godeau. It is shaded by three large chestnut trees and contains some ancient houses, one notably with a two-arched Romanesque window and another with the date 1524 carved above the doorway. In the centre is a disconsolate column of bluish granite to which is ignominiously fixed a brass water-tap. This column seems to have wandered from some museum and to have lost both its way and its label. There are those who affirm that it was a gift of the Phocæans to the ancient town, others that it came from the temple of Mars; while those who range less far believe it to be a

<sup>1</sup> “Grasse and its Vicinity,” by Walter J. Kaye, 1912.

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Roman boundary stone or *borne*. From this Place can be seen the great watch tower of Vence, often called the tower of the castle. It is square and very severely plain, and contains the belfry and a too modern clock. The tower belongs to the fifteenth century, or to even an earlier period. From this square can also be seen a little lancet window of the church which is perhaps the oldest of its present lights.

The town of old Vence is small and cramped. Around the church, crushed in between it and the city wall, is a maze of small streets. They still maintain the lines they followed long before the day when—in England—Elizabeth was queen. They are narrow, of course, and dark and crowded with houses of great age, houses of such antiquity that no modern mask can hide the hollow eyes or the shrunken cheeks. There are among them handsome windows and fine entries, good mason's work and some decoration pitiable in its playfulness.

The place is almost empty. Certain houses are deserted; a few are ruinous, and in these the black, blank windows glare like the eye-sockets of a skull. Many show the tottering deformities of age and have become crippled, wizened and bent.

This almost silent city once held seven thousand people. Its streets were then crowded, full of life and colour, of fair women and stalwart men. The wayfarer would need squeeze himself into a doorway to allow the lady in a litter to pass by, or to make room for a company of young gallants rollicking along arm in arm, or for the wedding party on its way to the cathedral close. The place is now hushed like a house of mourning, while in many a lane there may be no one to be seen.

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He who strolls alone through the city of Vence may find himself carried back into the past by some nightmare witchery, and imagine that he wanders in a strange country, amid the scenes of a half-forgotten tale. There is about the streets the faint, musty smell that clings to the leaves of an ancient missal or that hovers about the worm-eaten chest stuffed with lumber. To read the life of the town as it was in earlier times is like the turning over of a bundle of old letters that are fragmentary and partly illegible, that are strange in both the wording and the script, but that show now and then a sudden light that illumines the figure of a man or a woman who stands out amidst the gloom—alive.

## X

### GRASSE

**G**RASSE lies on a green slope at the foot of sheltering hills and in full view of the sea. From its height of one thousand feet a glorious stretch of undulating country sweeps down to the Mediterranean, some seven or eight miles to the south. The position of the town is suggestive of great ease. It is comparable to that of a man stretched out on a bank in the sun, with his hands under his head, his hat tilted over his eyes and with a rock behind him to ward away unkindly winds. It is a gentle and contented place, quiet and yet busy in its own peculiar way.

The history of Grasse is modest and unemotional. It has always been a shy town, glad to be left alone and to keep itself untroubled by the world. It does not pretend to be very old. It is said that Roman coins have been discovered in Grasse, but this means little, for that imperious but careless people appear to have dropped money here and there all over the country. One wonders whether, when England is dug up by archæologists two thousand years hence, half-crowns and coppers will be found among the ruins of its towns in anything like the profusion with which the currency of Rome was scattered.

Grasse appears to emerge into the light of history

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some time in the twelfth century in association with Raymond Berenger and his famous seneschal Romée de Villeneuve. Its reputation has been largely commercial. Terrin in the "*Précis de l'Histoire de Provence*"<sup>1</sup> says that "this town in the twelfth century supplied the whole of France, Italy and Spain with its famous leather, soap and oil skilfully purified"; while another author goes further and affirms "that the whole of Europe obtained its soap from Grasse."

Grasse began its career in the twelfth century as a little republic in alliance—for purposes of mutual protection—with Pisa. This form of government was maintained until 1226. When wars were raging in the country around and towns were being besieged, looted or burnt, Grasse remained unmoved. It looked on from a distance, lifted its hands in horror and went on with its soap-making. It was never a quarrelsome town and never ambitious of power. It was more keenly concerned with the purity of its oils and the sweetness of its scents. It took a motherly interest in its unfortunate neighbours and became a place of refuge for troubled people along the ever-troubled coast.

It was fortified, but not in too serious or too aggressive a way. It was besieged, but always in a comparatively gentle manner, without unnecessary noise and battering of walls and doors and with casualties that may almost be called complimentary. One siege in November, 1589, is very fully described in the diary of a besieged resident, a certain Monsieur Rocomare. Mr. Kaye

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Mr. W. J. Kaye in his excellent work on "*Grasse and Its Vicinity*," published in 1912, a work which provides a good summary of the history of the town.



GRASSE : THE DE CABRIS HOUSE.





## Grasse

quotes this record at some length. The attacking general appears to have been wounded early in the fray and to have "fallen into convulsions." "Whereby," says M. Rocomare, "the whole camp was thrown into confusion." The siege proceeded in spite of the general's fit. When things were not going well with the town the people of Grasse proposed—as they always did—a treaty. It was accepted. By this agreement the men-at-arms of Grasse and as many townsfolk as wished were allowed to leave the city with the honours of war and with all their baggage. Unfortunately the attacking army, demoralised, it may be, by the sight of their general in convulsions, broke their compact, seized all the baggage and horses and killed no fewer than seventeen persons. The besiegers occupied the town and M. Rocomare had billeted upon him a cornet, six soldiers, ten serving men, some horses and a mule. This forced entertainment cost him 260 golden crowns; but, worst of all, the ungrateful cornet, on taking leave of his host, robbed him of his cattle and of "other things."

In the bitter religious wars of the time which rent and racked the whole adjacent country, Grasse took but little part. It was appropriately shocked at the spectacle of Christians fighting and then went on with its soap-making. The people of Grasse, however, had their local religious quarrels which seem to have been concerned not with matters of doctrine, but rather with questions of fees and emoluments and especially with burial fees. In these disputes over money "the clergy," as Mr. Kaye remarks, "seemed strangely to have forgotten their high calling," for they actually fought for the possession of coffins containing the dead, and there must have been

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regrettable scenes in the graveyard when the clerics and their subordinates were engaged in what was practically a tug-of-war over a coffin.

The more direct afflictions of Grasse arose from the passage through the town of foreign troops. Over and over again the Cours or the Place Neuve was occupied by bodies of armed men, who, although they had no especial reason for hostile action against Grasse, yet behaved in a very trying and unseemly manner. They would march up to the town and, without adequate explanation, would demand a war bonus of as much as 36,000 livres or more. They would billet themselves in the town, would smash windows, break tiles and carry off doors. For what purpose an army on the march should need doors is not made clear; but that the intruders should cause a rise in the cost of living is intelligible. A writer who was in the town on the occasion of one of these visits says, with disgust, that wine cost 40 centimes a pint, brown bread 25 centimes a pound, and eggs actually 15 centimes each. He adds a remark which shows how, even in little things, history may be anticipated, for he says: "All our fruit trees have been burned save a few olive trees which have been saved from the violence of the Germans."

The old town of Grasse is very picturesque and abounding in interest. Being placed upon a slope, it comes to pass that its ways are steep. The houses are tall and the lanes are narrow, so the place is full of shadows. The streets ramble and wind about in that leisurely manner which is characteristic of Grasse, until they become a veritable tangle. The stranger wandering through Grasse is apt, after traversing many streets,

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to find himself in the exact spot whence he started. It is not wise to ask one's way in Grasse, but merely to drift about, from lane to lane, until the object sought is stumbled on. It will be met with in time. There are various old houses to be seen which appertain to many periods. Some of them are disguised by modern plaster and paint, some have been "restored" to the point of extinction, while not a few are represented only by fragments. They illustrate the effect of putting new wine into old bottles: "the bottles break and the wine runneth out and the bottles perish."

Of the old ramparts which surrounded the town in the fourteenth century but a trace or two remain, although the line they pursued can still be followed. The Boulevard du Jeu de Ballon represents the western side of the *enceinte*, and the Passage Mirabeau its southern part. Where the two met was the Porte du Cours. The eastern flank is indicated by the Place Neuve and La Roque and the rounded northern end by the Rue des Cordeliers and the Avenue Maximin Isnard. Of the seven original gates two only survive—the Porte Neuve (rebuilt in 1793) and the Porte de la Roque.

The chief feature of Grasse is the Cours, a charming promenade just outside the confines of the old town. It is here that the band plays and here that the idler can enjoy the superb view which opens out to the sea and admire—if he will—the statue to Fragonard which adorns the spot. Leading down from the Cours into the old town is the Rue du Cours, a narrow lane of little shops. The first house in this street—a corner house, No. 2—was the town mansion of the Marquis de Cabris and his startling wife Louise. Some account of this mercurial

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lady is given in the chapter which follows. The de Cabris came from the delightful village of Cabris, five miles from Grasse. There stands what remains of their castle, which was reduced to a heap of ruins at the time of the Revolution.

The house in the Rue du Cours is a plain building of four stories, rising from a base of stone. It is of considerable size and the back of it forms a large block in the Passage Mirabeau. Its portal is prim and severe and in a strict classical style. So dull is this entry that it is hard to picture the frivolous and beautiful Louise standing on the door step, buttoning up her gloves and meditating some fresh devilment. It is a house that no one could associate with the thrilling scandal which buzzed about it when the mocking laughter of the little marquise could be heard ringing from the solemn windows. The house is now occupied by offices and flats of the gravest respectability. As if some odour of old days still clung to it, the walls, I noticed, were blazing with red and yellow posters vaunting the attractions of a play dealing with the allurements of women.

Almost opposite to the de Cabris mansion, and at the extreme end of the Boulevard du Jeu de Ballon, is the ancient house of the de Pontevès family. It is a huge, square building, severely plain and free from any pretence at decoration. It has on one side a little walled garden which abuts on the Cours. The house has had a gloomy history. It was at one time the headquarters of the executive council of Var. During the time of the Terror (1793-4) it became the seat of the Revolutionary Tribunal. It has sheltered Fréron—he who had the audacity to seek the hand of Pauline Bonaparte—



GRASSE: THE CATHEDRAL.



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as well as Robespierre, who was himself guillotined in 1794. In its salon the wretched victims denounced by the Revolution were tried, cursed at, and condemned, and through its gate they were marched to their death by the guillotine. The guillotine stood in the Cours on the spot now occupied by the statue to Fragonard. The prisoners who looked out of the west windows of the house would see this fearful instrument only a few yards distant and would see also the howling, savage mob that surged around it. Yet between the condemned and their place of death was the comfort of the little quiet garden shut in with its high wall. Thirty people in all were guillotined at Grasse during the Terror, and among them a poor nun over seventy years of age, whose name, by a strange coincidence, was de Pontevès.

When peace was restored to France the Hôtel de Pontevès became the municipal library and later on (in 1811) it was swept and garnished and made ready to receive the Princess Pauline Bonaparte, the sister of Napoleon I. This beautiful woman, the "Venus victrix" of Canova, was at the moment forlorn and unhappy. She had been deserted by her second husband, the Prince Borghese, and banished from the Court by her brother on account of her disrespectful bearing towards the Empress. She was, moreover, ill and weary both in body and mind, and yet she was only thirty-one. "Out of consideration for the distinguished invalid the silence of the early morning was disturbed neither by the ringing of bells nor by the cries of milk-sellers in the streets; even the mules went without their tinkling *sonnailles*."<sup>1</sup> One may imagine that Pauline sat often in the little garden

<sup>1</sup> "Grasse and Its Vicinity," by W. J. Kaye, 1912, p. 17.

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with the high wall, and that her sedan chair would now and then be carried to the Cours so that she might by chance get a glimpse of the beloved island of Corsica where she was born.

Near the Cours is the Boulevard Fragonard. In the house (No. 4) of the Marquis de Villeneuve-Bargemon will be seen the beautiful carved door that came from the old hotel of the Marquis de Gourdon. It was by the removal of the Gourdon mansion in 1858 that the present Place du Marché was made. No. 15 Boulevard Fragonard—with its curious iron window cages—was the residence of the famous painter after whom the Boulevard is named. The place of his birth was No. 2 Rue de la Font Neuve.

Turning out of the Rue du Cours is the Rue Tracastel with its vaulted arch beneath an old tower. It is by way of this lane that the cathedral square may be reached. The church, which is the most beautiful building in Grasse, was completed in the twelfth century. It is small and low and its western façade, which looks upon the square, is very simple. The large pointed doorway is approached by an exquisite double flight of steps with a white balustrade. The doors themselves are finely carved and bear the date 1722. There are two lancet windows on this front and traces of two doors of the same date as the principal one. The walls are of light yellow-grey stone. The church within is as gracious as its western front. The nave is surmounted by a handsome groined roof with square ribs, supported by heavy pillars without capitals. The arches of the nave are occupied by galleries with marble railings which are quite modern and painfully out of keeping with the rest of the



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building. The south transept is occupied by the chapel of the Holy Sacrament, which is said to have existed since 1448. It is a beautiful chapel, but a little marred by the too elaborate ornament of a later date. There are many pictures of interest in the church, the most notable being Fragonard's "Washing of the Disciples' Feet," painted in 1754.

The church contains numerous treasures among which is a reliquary of St. Honorat, shaped like a house and carved out of a solid block of walnut some three feet in length. It dates from the middle of the fifteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

The belfry of the church is in the form of a tall, white tower, square and severely simple. It is one of the landmarks of Grasse. It dates from 1368, but was shattered by lightning in 1742 and rebuilt at that period.

Close to the cathedral is the tower of Grasse, the Tour du Puy, an ancient watch tower raised on Roman foundations. It too is square and plain, but almost black in colour and very menacing by reason of its great height and its massive strength. It is a veritable bully of a tower and forms a harsh contrast with the pale, delicately moulded and fragile-looking little church. It has certain modern windows, made still more incongruous by sun-shutters and by the ancient Romanesque windows which find a place by the side of them.

There is a marble tablet on the Tour du Puy which is of some interest. It is to the immortal memory of Bellaud de la Bellaudière. The holder of this most sonorous name was a poet. He was born in 1532. He

<sup>1</sup> A photograph and description of this remarkable relic will be found in Mr. Kaye's book.

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appears to have played in Grasse the parts of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde; for when he was not engaged in writing emotional ballads he occupied himself with thieving. He did well in both of these pursuits. As a poet he was honoured by this tablet on the tower; as a robber he came to the gallows and was hanged by the neck.

The Rue Droite, the main highway of old Grasse, is a narrow lane of small shops that continues the Rue du Cours. It is not so straight as its name suggests, being, indeed, a little unsteady. It contains many old houses of interest with fine stone doorways, some with a rounded and others with a pointed arch. Over one entry is the date 1527. At No. 24 lived Doria de Roberti who in 1580 had the distinction of being both physician to the king and perfumer to the queen, a position which, at the present day, would be one of great professional perplexity. The house is not worthy of one who is described as "the earliest known perfumer"; for it is quite modern in aspect and is given up jointly to a café and to a shop where ready-made clothes for women are sold. No. 28 is a fine house, with an ancient doorway which is said to have borne the date 1622; while the portal of No. 32 has a dignity which—as is often the case—the rest of the building does not maintain.

From the Rue Droite the interesting Rue de l'Oratoire leads, after some vacillation, to the Place aux Aires. This is a very charming little square, occupied in the centre by a double row of trees and, at the far extremity, by a fountain. The end of the tiny Place which faces the fountain has an interest which is not apparent to the eye. It is occupied by three quite modest houses, numbered 37, 39 and 41. No. 37 is a ladies' hat shop, No. 39



GRASSE : THE PLACE AUX AIRES.



## Grasse

is a draper's with the inviting name "Au grand Paris" and No. 41 is tenanted by a butcher. These three humble shops represent the spot upon which stood no less a building than the palace of Queen Jeanne and, indeed, in the house No. 41 can be seen her kitchen stairs—a poor relic but the only one. In the chapter which follows some account is given of this remarkable and alarming woman and of certain things that she did.

Of the many other interesting streets of Grasse it is impossible to speak in detail, except to draw attention to the fine Romanesque windows in the Rue Mougins-Roquefort and to those picturesque streets Rue sans Peur and Rue Rêve Vieille which are more curious even than their unusual names.

Most fascinating of all is the Rue de l'Evêché. It is a street of the Middle Ages, little changed and little spoiled. It is a mystery street full of romance and suggestion. It makes one draw one's breath. It recalls so vividly a score of tales of mediæval days; for it is just that narrow, winding, dim and haunting lane where thrilling things always happened—stabblings in the dark, pursuits with torches and the clang of arms, whisperings of cloaked conspirators, the beckoning hand and the lover with the panting lady in the hood.

The business of Grasse, as is well known, is the making of scent, soap and refined oil. It is an ancient, famous and most prosperous industry. The quantity of flowers consumed in the perfumeries is so vast as to be hard to realise.

Mr. Kaye states, in a quiet way and without concern, that four million pounds of orange blossoms and three million pounds of roses—to name no others—are

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

swept into the iron maw of the factory every year. Weight is a little misleading when it deals with rose leaves and mimosa blossoms so Mr. Kaye explains that, as regards jasmine alone, nine billions six hundred millions of jasmine flowers are picked by hand every year to provide the world with the *jasmin* perfume.

“The flower harvest,” he writes, “lasts nearly the whole year round. It begins in February with the violet which lasts till April. In March and April also hyacinths and jonquils are plucked. May marks the greatest activity in the harvest of roses and orange flowers, which harvest terminates usually in June. Mignonette and carnations are also gathered in this month. The jasmine is gathered in July, and the harvest lasts generally till October 10th. The tuberoses are also picked during August and September.”

As the country for miles around Grasse is given up to the cultivation of flowers it may be assumed that the town lies in a Garden of Eden, dazzling with colour and laden with the perfumes of Araby. But it realises no such vision; since flowers grown for commerce, drilled into unfeeling lines and treated like the turnip of the field, are very different from those grown for pleasure and those that blossom, by their own sweet will, in the wilds. They differ as a crate of violets knocked down to the auctioneer's hammer at Covent Garden differs from the shy, purple flowers that fringe a scented passage through a wood.

Those who have any regard for flowers should avoid a perfume factory as they would a slaughter-house; for it is not pleasant to see a white company of soft orange blossoms lying dead at the bottom of a pit, sodden and

## Grasse

macerated, nor to watch roses being slowly boiled alive, nor jasmine flowers crushed to death upon the rack.

Many hundreds of day-tourists pour through Grasse during the months of the winter. They come by char-à-bancs and motor-brakes. Their stay in the town is very brief, for the "excursion to Grasse" embraces much in its breathless flight. They are deposited at a scent factory by a not disinterested driver, and there they purchase soap with eagerness, as if it were the bread of life. Ninety-nine per cent. of these soap-questing pilgrims do not go beyond the factory which they appear to regard as a sort of shrine, even though its odour is not that of sanctity. To just one out of the hundred the idea may occur that soap of quite fair quality may be obtained in many places—even in Brixton in England—but that in few places can there be found an old French city so full of picturesque memories and possessed of so exquisite a cathedral as Grasse provides. From a hygienic point of view the triumph of soap over sentiment is commendable, but the hygienic attitude of mind is one of rigour and offensive superiority. The one tourist out of the hundred wanders into the ancient town, loses his way, loses his char-à-banc and returns by the tramcar, with his mind full of charming recollections but his pocket empty of soap. While he glories over the romance of mediæval by-ways his fellow-tourists gloat over a wash-hand basin or a pungent handkerchief.

## XI

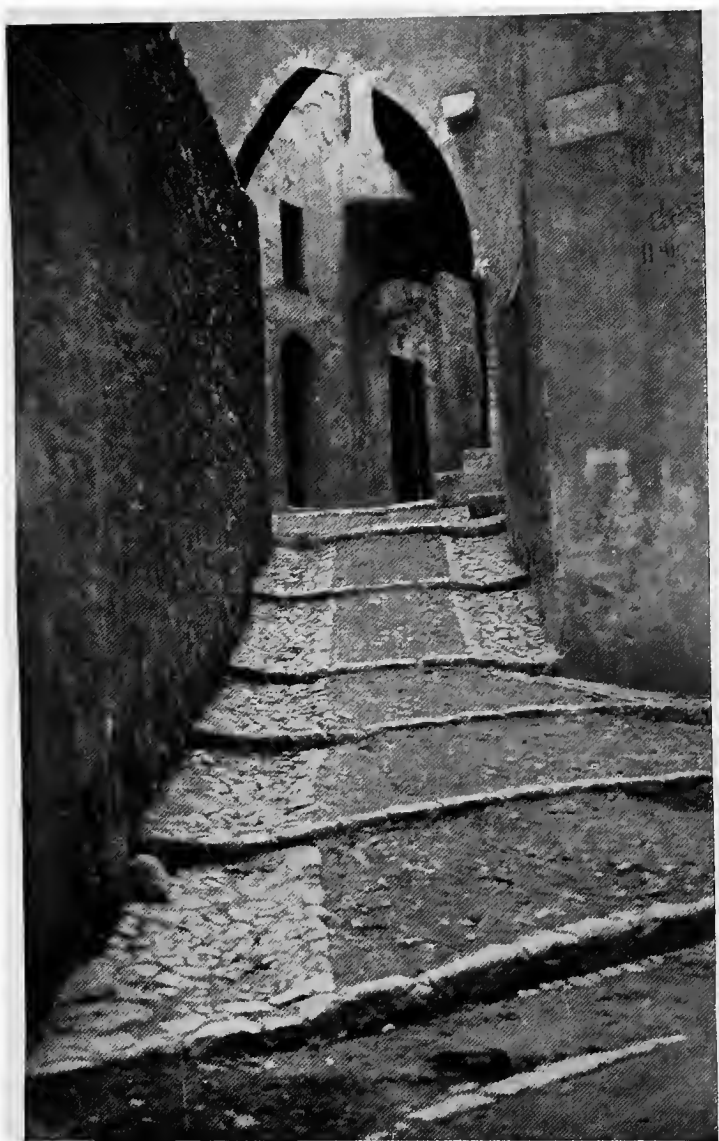
### A PRIME MINISTER AND TWO LADIES OF GRASSE

**R**OMÉE DE VILLENEUVE.—There is a somewhat picturesque story in the old chronicles relating to one Romée de Villeneuve, seneschal of Grasse and the *premier ministre* of the Count of Provence.<sup>1</sup> The count with whom the story deals was Raymond Berenger IV, who came into power in 1209 and died in 1245. This Raymond was the husband of the beautiful Beatrix of Savoy—the same Beatrix who inspired the passionate verses of the troubadour of Eze.

Raymond the count when walking one day through the streets of Grasse came upon a pilgrim. The pious man was dressed in the robe of his brotherhood. In his hand was a long staff; upon his feet were sandals and in his hat the cockleshell. The count was struck by his carriage and by the nobility of his appearance. He stopped him and questioned him as to his pilgrimage, as to the things that he had seen and learned in his journey through many countries and by way of many roads. The answers that the pilgrim gave pleased him. He was impressed by his intelligence, by the gentleness of his manner and the graceful sentiment that accompanied his talk. It was agreeable to converse with a man who had seen strange cities and who had gleaned such curious grains of wisdom

<sup>1</sup> "Contes Populaires des Provençaux," by Beranger-Feraud, 1887.





GRASSE : RUE DE L'EVÊCHÉ.



## A Prime Minister and Two Ladies of Grasse

in his tramp through valley and wood, by stony paths and smooth.

The count talked longer with the pilgrim than the courtiers liked. They frowned and fidgeted, scuffled with their feet, assumed attitudes of weariness and talked among themselves rather audibly about "this fellow." Finally the count asked the pilgrim if he would come into his service and the worthy man, after some hesitation and with proper expressions of respect, consented.

Romée had not been long under the castle roof before Raymond recognised his ability and his absolute uprightness. The count and the pilgrim became more than master and servant; they became friends. Many a time the two would sit in a corner of the terrace when the heat of the day was over and Romée would tell of the wonders of the Eternal City, of the street fighting he had seen in Florence between the Amidei and the Buondelmonte, of the new church of San Giovanni at Pistoia, of the wonderful bell tower they were building at Pisa, and of the ruins of the palace of Theodoric the Great that he had wandered among at Ravenna. He would talk too of strange things, of the savage, mist-enveloped island of England where the cliffs were white, of the flight of birds, of wondrous flowers that bloomed among the snow, of the hiving of bees, of the curious ways of women.

Year by year the pilgrim rose in power; year by year he took a wider part in the affairs of state; and year by year the affection that bound the two men together deepened and gained in strength. Romée became the count's most trusted counsellor and confidant, and, in due course, was raised to the position of *premier ministre* and seneschal of Grasse.

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This was a terrible blow to the courtiers, the last straw that broke the back of their restraint. They had always been jealous of this interloper and hated him heartily and openly. To see the most dignified office that the Court of Provence could grant bestowed upon a stranger, a man stumbled upon in the street, was beyond endurance. The count was bewitched and befooled, they said, and must be awakened from his evil dream.

The courtiers took the matter of the enlightenment of their prince in hand. They began to hint at things, to sow suspicions, to raise subjects for inquiry. Did the count know anything of this man, anything of his parentage or antecedents? The count knew only that Romée was a man noble in heart and mind, his trusted counsellor and esteemed friend.

No seed grows so quickly as the seed of doubt. No hint but gains strength by repetition. Those about the Court, judging that the count's confidence must be shaken by their efforts, ventured to go beyond hinting and whispering and the shrugging of shoulders. They came one day boldly before him and said that Romée was taking money from the treasury, was in fact robbing the State. The count was furious that so disgraceful a charge should be made against his favourite, told the informers that they lied and demanded instant grounds for their base charges. The spokesman of the party replied that the minister kept, in his private room, a coffer which he allowed no one to touch and which no one had ever seen open. From sounds heard at night by listeners outside the door there was little doubt that in this chest Romée was hoarding money pilfered from the treasury.

The speaker, with a bow, humbly suggested that his

## A Prime Minister and Two Ladies of Grasse

lordship should come with them at once to the minister's room and request him to open the coffer. The count stamped and swore. He would never subject his friend to such an indignity. De Villeneuve was as far above suspicion as himself. The proposal was monstrous. Some soft-voiced officer then hinted that the minister would be glad to put an end to these unfortunate but persistent rumours by simply opening the box. This seemed reasonable to the count, but someone, more wily still, whispered in his ear "Would he be so glad?" The seed of doubt, long sown in the prince's mind, was beginning to break into baneful blossom. He cried, "No more of this! Come with me, and we will bring this foul matter to an issue."

They all made for the minister's room. Romée was sitting alone. He rose with extreme surprise to see the count, flushed and hard of face, enter with this company of solemn men—enemies all—who eyed him like a pack of wolves. The count, avoiding the gaze of his favourite, pointed at once to the coffer and said, "I beg you to open that chest." To this Romée replied, "My lord, I would prefer, by your grace, not to open it." "Why?" demanded the prince. "Because it contains a treasure of mine that is dear to me and to no one else." The courtiers began to whisper, to laugh, to jeer under their breath. The count, stung by their scoffing murmurs, lost his head, and turning to his minister said with some sternness, "I bid you to open that chest." Romée, looking with sadness into his master's eyes, said gently, "My lord, since *you* no longer trust me, I will open the box." He withdrew a key from his gown, undid the lock, and threw wide the lid. The chest was empty but for a few

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

sorry things—a dusty, tattered pilgrim's frock, two worn sandals, a coarse shirt and a weather-stained hat with a cockleshell in it. These were the things he wore when Raymond Berenger met him in the street. After a moment of dreadful silence the count, turning to his courtiers, said in a voice of thunder, “Leave my presence, you scoundrels too mean to live.”

When the two were alone the prince, placing his hands upon Romée's shoulders, said, “Dear friend! I am humbled to the dust. I am more sorry than any words of mine can tell. Can you ever forgive me?” To which the one-time pilgrim replied, “My lord, I forgive you a thousand times over; but you have broken my heart, and now, in God's name, leave me and let me be alone.”

There and then Romée de Villeneuve took off his robes of office and, having donned the pilgrim's dress in which he had arrived at the castle, made his way out of the gate into the open road. Raymond Berenger never saw him again. Where the pilgrim wandered no one knows. All that the chronicle relates is that he died in the castle of Vence and that his will was dated 1250—five years after the death of the count, his master.

Many a time in the days that followed Romée's disappearance Count Raymond would be found standing alone in a certain deserted room gazing at an empty coffer.

QUEEN JEANNE.—As has been said in the previous chapter, there was in the Place aux Aires at Grasse a palace of Queen Jeanne, who died in 1382. When Jeanne took refuge in Provence with her second husband—after the murder of her first—she caused this palace to be built. All that is left of it, at the present day, is the

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kitchen stair and a few mouldings, but, writes Miss Dempster, "there is not a bare-foot child but can tell you that those steps belonged to the palace of Queen Jeanne."<sup>1</sup>

There is no evidence that this meteoric lady ever lived in this house that she had built, although she was Countess of Provence as well as Queen of Naples. It was from no indisposition to travel on her part, for she was never quiet and never in one place long, not even when she was in prison. Flitting about from Provence to Naples took up no little of her time, and when she was not occupied on these journeys she was either pursuing her enemies or being, in turn, pursued by them.

In the language of the history book she "flourished" in the fourteenth century. The expression is ineffective, for she "blazed" rather than flourished. She was the political fidget of her time. A beautiful and passionate woman, she traversed the shores of the Mediterranean like a whirlwind. Her adventures would occupy the longest film of the most sensational picture theatre. Tragedy and violent domestic scenes became her most; but wherever she went there circled around her the makings of a drama of some kind. All the materials for a moving story were present. The scene was laid in feudal times when the license of the great was unrestrained. The heroine was a pretty woman who fascinated everyone who came in her path. She was, moreover, a wayward lady of ability and wide ambitions who was quite unscrupulous, who felt herself never called upon to keep her word and who was determined to get whatever she wanted.

<sup>1</sup> "The Maritime Alps," by Miss Dempster, 1885.

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She had a somewhat immoderate taste for matrimony, since she was a widow four times and would probably have married a fifth husband had not a friend of her youth strangled her when she was in prison. Her selection of husbands was catholic, as the list of men she chose will show. They were, in the order in which they died, Andrew of Hungary, Louis of Tarentum, James of Majorca, and Otto of Brunswick.

She was charged with having murdered her first husband. The charge was pressed by popular clamour and she was tried, in great state, in her own town of Avignon, in Provence, in the year 1348. The Pope himself presided. At the trial she is said to have made a deep impression on the court. She startled this august assembly of solemn men. They saw in her a woman full of the tenderest charm. They were moved by her grace, by her ease of manner, by the sweetness of her voice, by her pathos-stirring eloquence, and—strangest of all—by her remarkable knowledge of Latin. She was acquitted and then publicly blessed by the Pope.

Her loyal subjects at Naples were not satisfied with this tribunal. They wanted their queen tried over again. They were rather proud of her and they liked revelations of palace life. Probably too they knew a little more than had “come out” at Avignon. Anyhow, the Pope was compelled again to proclaim her innocent, and, being a man of the world and anxious to put himself in the right, he added that even if she *had* murdered her husband she had been the victim of witchcraft and sorcery and so was not responsible for her actions.

Queen Jeanne the Unquiet was one of the most obstinate women that ever lived. The only way to in-



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fluence her was to put her in prison and her experience of prisons was large. At one time she was disposed to hand over Provence, or some part of it, to the King of France or other neighbouring potentate. To stop this recklessness she was arrested by the barons of Les Baux and of adjacent Provençal towns and locked up. Having promised never to alienate Provence or any part of it, she was let out of jail; but she had not long been free before she sold Avignon, the chief town of Provence, to the Pope for 80,000 gold florins. As an excuse she said, with a smile, that she was rather short of money.

The obstinacy of this irrepressible lady led to her dramatic ending. She took a very decided part in the controversy known as the Great Schism of the West. Her determined attitude led to many and varied troubles. Finally she was besieged in Castel Nuovo and there had to surrender to her kinsman and one time friend, Charles of Durazzo. He attempted to make her renounce the errors—or reputed errors—to which she clung. He failed, and “finding that nothing could bend her indomitable spirit, he strangled her in prison on May 12th, 1382.”<sup>1</sup>

LOUISE DE CABRIS.—On a certain day, in the year 1769, there was great commotion in and around the mansion of the Marquis de Cabris in the Rue du Cours. The young marquis was bringing home his bride. The de Cabris represented the pinnacle of society in Grasse. They were the great people of the town. To know them was in itself a distinction. The bride belonged to a family even more eminent, for she was the daughter

<sup>1</sup> “Old Provence,” by T. A. Cook, 1914, vol. 2, p. 298.

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of the Marquis de Mirabeau, of Mirabeau, near Aix en Provence. She was a mere girl, being only seventeen years of age.

The nice, worthy people of Grasse received her with effusive kindness. They were sorry for her, because they knew the husband. He was young, weak and vicious and came from a stock deeply tainted with insanity. They took the gentle little marquise under their motherly wing. They petted her, made much of her and comforted her in a warm, caressing way. They knew as little what kind of innocent they were fussing over as does a hen who fosters a pretty ball of yellow down that turns into a duckling.

When Louise, Marquise de Cabris, reached her full stature, those who had mothered her viewed with amazement the product of their care. They beheld a lady who was not only the terror of Grasse, but a subject for scandal far beyond anything that the virtuous town had ever dreamed of. Louise, the full-grown woman, was beautiful to look at, was an adept in the arts of seduction, was brilliant in speech and possessed of a dazzling but dangerous wit. She was a woman of great vitality who loved excitement and cared little of what kind it was. She was depraved in a genial kind of way, picturesquely wicked, had a lover, of course—a feeble youth named Briançon—had no heart and no principles. She could claim, as one writer says, “the Mirabeau madness and badness and all the Mirabeau brains.”<sup>1</sup>

When the good old ladies of Grasse gossiped together they no longer discussed what they could do to help the

<sup>1</sup> “Life of Mirabeau,” by S. G. Tallentyre. “Les Mirabeau,” by L. de Lomenie.

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poor marquise. Their sole anxiety was to know "what on earth she would do next." She did a great deal. Incidentally she challenged another lady to fight a duel with pistols. Think of it! The timid, clinging bride of a few years taking to fighting with firearms! What next indeed!

Louise was much attached to her famous brother, the great Mirabeau, the orator, statesman and roué. Whenever this illustrious man was in a mess—and he was very often in a mess—he always came for help and sympathy to his nimble-minded and wicked sister. Louise was the only member of the Mirabeau family who attended his wedding with Mademoiselle Marignane, and she had always regarded his shortcomings with indulgence and even with admiration.

One visit that Mirabeau paid to his sister at Grasse became memorable. The brother was in some trouble again. The affair had to do with his wife's lover and he came to his sister as to an expert in the treatment of lovers.

Now shortly before his arrival the sober city of Grasse had passed through a species of convulsion. Placards had been mysteriously posted all over the town in which the characters of the ladies of Grasse were attacked in the coarsest and plainest language. It was curious that one lady's name was not touched upon. Of all names the name of the Marquise de Cabris alone was wanting. The inference naturally followed that the libels had been propagated by the de Cabris. There was a violent and confused uproar which was hushed at last by the payment to the injured parties of a large sum by the foolish Marquis de Cabris. Louise, on

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the other hand, who had no doubt written the abusive lampoons herself, placidly disclaimed all knowledge of the matter. She said, with hauteur, that they were beneath her notice and, at the same time, wished it to be known that she was very cross with those who had the audacity to suspect her.

Among the society folk who had "said things" about Madame de Cabris in connection with the libels was her next-door neighbour, a certain Baron de Villeneuve-Monans.

The gardens of the baron and the lady touched. These gardens ended in two terraces one above the other, like two steps. On the upper terrace the marquise had built a summer house which she called *Le Pavillon des Indes*. It was her *Petit Trianon*, her quiet corner, and was surmounted by a gilded goat's head, the goat's head being the "canting" arms of the Cabris (*cabri*).

On the occasion of her brother's visit Louise gave a quiet dinner in her pavilion. The party consisted of her brother and herself, her lover Briançon and an unnamed lady who was invited, no doubt, to entertain Mirabeau. Before the meal was over the baron appeared on the upper terrace of his garden, in order to take the air before the sun went down. Louise pointed him out to her brother, told him what the baron had done and what she would do with that nobleman if she had the strength. Mirabeau at once jumped up from the table, stepped over into the baron's garden and fell upon the unsuspecting man with explosive violence.

Now to introduce a comic element into a conflict of this kind it is essential that at least one of the combatants should be elderly and corpulent and that, by



GRASSE : RUE SANS PEUR.



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some means or another, an umbrella should be brought into the affair. All these factors were present. The baron was over fifty; he was very fat and, as the evening was hot, he carried an umbrella. Excessive perspiration, also, is considered to be conducive to humour.

Mirabeau, the statesman, flew at the fat man, bashed in his hat and, seizing the umbrella, proceeded to beat him on the head with it. Further he made the baron's nose bleed and tore his clothes, especially about the neck.

He also kicked him. The fat baron, who was shaped like a melon, clung to the agile politician, with the result that they both rolled off the terrace on to the ledge below, where sober gardeners, with bent backs, were busy with the soil. These honest men were surprised to see two members of the aristocracy drop from a wall and roll along the ground, with an umbrella serving as a kind of axle, snarling like cats and using language that would have brought a blush to the cheek of a pirate.

Louise, on the terrace above, was beside herself with joy. She screamed, she clapped her hands, she stamped, she jumped with pure delight. She was in an ecstasy; and when a fresh rent appeared in the baron's coat or when fresh mud appeared on his face as he rolled over and over, or when Mirabeau's fist sounded upon him like a drum she was bent double with laughter.

Mirabeau was of course arrested for his part in this entertainment and was sentenced to two years' imprisonment. The prison to which he was sent was the famous Château d'If. In his confinement, however,

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he was consoled by thinking that he had given his sister the merriest day in her life.

The Mirabeau family was a peculiar one. The Marquis de Mirabeau hated his daughter and she, as cordially, hated him. The basis of the enmity was the fact that Louise sided with her mother in the constant quarrels upon which her parents were engaged. The marquis, who called his daughter Rongelime after the serpent in the fable, contrived to have her sent to the Ursuline convent at Sisteron, as a punishment for her many and scandalous misdeeds. The sisters were, no doubt, pleased to receive so noble a lady; but their pleasure was short-lived, for at the dinner table the marquise used such unusual language and told such improper stories that the convent was soon divided into two parties—those who were too horrified to associate with her and those who could not withstand the lure of the beautiful woman who said such thrillingly dreadful things.

Exile to Sisteron was rather a severe measure for the flighty Louise. Although it is one of the most picturesque towns in this part of France it lies far away among the hills, no less than 118 miles from Nice by the Grenoble road. This road, which is as full of wonders and enchantment as any road in an adventurous romance, did not exist in the days of Madame de Cabris.

Sisteron stands in a narrow gorge through which rushes the Durance river. The pass is bounded on either side by a towering precipice. The town, which has only room for one long dim street, clings to a ledge some few yards above the torrent and at the foot



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of the loftier cliff. On the summit of this height stood the castle, the place of which is now occupied by a modern military work. In the town, besides the exquisite church of Notre Dame of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, are four isolated and very lonely round towers. They were built about the year 1364. They are put to no purpose, but simply stand in a row on vacant ground, looking disconsolate, as if they had been accidentally left behind when the other ancient properties of the city were removed.

Across the river, at the foot of the gentler cliff, is a little wizen, sun-bleached place called the Old Town. It is made up of gaunt houses which show many traces of grandeur and of haughty bearing; but which are now tenanted by a colony of poor and picturesquely untidy folk. At the far end of this row of ghostly buildings is Louise's convent, where she chafed and fumed, said terrible things and told un-nun-like stories.

It was a bustling place in its day but it is now deserted and falling into ruin. Those who would realise the pathos and the beauty of the last days of an old convent should make a pilgrimage to Sisteron. The convent buildings are tenanted by a few humble families who seem to have settled here in the half-hearted mood of diffident intruders. There cannot be many habitable rooms left in the rambling building, although there is much space for hoarding rubbish. At one end is the little chapel, still almost intact, but in a state of lamentable neglect. It is low, has a curious rounded apse and a bell gable with two bells in it. One wonders who was the last to ring these bells, for their ropes are gone and

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

they must have been silent for many years. The ringer may have been some bent, grey-haired nun who loved the bells and, hearing them sound for the last time with infinite sorrow, would have dropped the rope with tears in her eyes.

The chapel is built of a warm, yellow stone and has a roof of rounded tiles of such exquisite tints of ashen-grey, of dull red and of chestnut brown that it may be covered with a rippled thatch of autumn leaves. At the other end of the convent is a fine campanile of sturdy mason's work. It is still proud and commanding, although its base is occupied by a stable and is stuffed with that dusty rubbish, that mouldy hay and those fragments of farm implements that the poor seem never to have the heart to destroy.

Behind the chapel is a tiny graveyard which is symbolic of the place; for it is so overgrown that its few sad monuments are almost hidden by weeds and scrubby bushes. The view from the convent is one of enchanting beauty. It looks down the valley of the Buëch which joins the main river just above the town. It might be a glade in Paradise.

The place is very silent. The only sounds to be heard are the same as would have fallen upon the ears of the restless marquise—the childlike chuckle of the river, the song of a shepherd on the hill, the clang of a blacksmith's hammer far away and the tolling of the old church bell across the stream.

Before long the illustrious Mirabeau was in another mess and needed once more the help of his experienced sister. This time he was running away with Madame de Monnier, the wife of a friend. Louise was still in

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the convent; but she could not resist the temptation of assisting her brother in this laudable and exciting enterprise. So she bolted from the convent, assumed a man's attire, armed herself and started on horseback with her lover Briançon to join the runaway couple. The movements of the party are a little difficult to follow. They went to Geneva, to Thonon and to Lyons. They had difficulties at the frontier and other mishaps. In some way Louise and Briançon failed Mirabeau at a critical moment. The lady seems to have lost her nerve and to have unwittingly given a clue as to her brother's whereabouts, so that he narrowly escaped capture.

Briançon and Mirabeau quarrelled, flew at one another's throats, and were parted, with difficulty, by the panting marquise. This episode led to a coolness between brother and sister, a coolness which in time ended in bitter enmity.

Then came the French Revolution which brought complete ruin to the de Cabris family and destruction to their house. Louise and her husband fled from the country during the Terror. When they returned to France they found their home at Grasse gone and their affairs in a state of dissolution. To add to the troubles of the irrepressible lady her husband had lapsed into a state of hopeless insanity.

The once gay marquise, having lost estate, position and friends, retired to a small *appartement* in Paris with her sick husband. She had one daughter who was married and had children.

The moralist may ask what was the end of this wild, rollicking and reckless woman. She did not end her days—as some may surmise—in a poor-house, a lunatic

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asylum or a jail. On the contrary she devoted the last years of her life to the care of her poor imbecile husband whom she nursed with a tenderness that the most loving wife could not exceed. More than that she applied her fine talents to the teaching of her grandchildren ; so that the last we see of the flighty marquise is a sweet-faced old lady, with white hair, who guides the finger of a child, standing at her knee, across the pages of a book of prayer.



CAGNES.



## XII

### CAGNES AND ST. PAUL DU VAR

**A** LONG the road from Nice to Vence are two interesting little towns, Cagnes and St. Paul du Var. CAGNES—or rather old Cagnes—is perched on the top of a beehive-shaped hill on the confines of a plain. It looks very picturesque from the distance and, unlike many other places, it is equally attractive near at hand.

It is an odd town in the sense that it is made up of odd fragments. There are no two things alike in Cagnes, nothing that matches. It is indeed a pile of very miscellaneous houses inclined to set themselves askew like the parts of a cubist picture. Mixed up with dwellings, notable by their contrariness and their obvious revolt against all that is conventional in the shape and arrangements of a house, are portions of old ramparts, a ruined sentry tower and a gate that has got astray from its connections. There is a church too that is apparently out of drawing, that has a lane burrowing under its tower and that has become wedged in among bits of a town on a precarious slope. It looks like a very decrepit sick person who has slipped down in bed. Curious chimneys (some of which are wonderful to see) form conspicuous features of the dwellings of Cagnes. There are houses that seem to have rather overdone

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their efforts to be picturesque; as well as others that have carried their determination to be simple to excess. Of the super-simple house the old *Maison commune* affords a good example.

Cagnes is a quiet town with a total absence of traffic in its streets. Indeed as if to show that the highway is not intended for traffic an old lady has seated herself in the centre of the main road to knit, finding, no doubt, the light better in that position than in a house. The sudden way in which lanes drop headlong down the hill, to the right and to the left, is quite disturbing. It is a place of pitfalls and hazardous stairs that must be very trying to the village drunkard.

The centre of Cagnes—its Place de la Concorde—is a peasant-like little place, humble and very still, called the Place Grimaldi. It is made green by a line of acacia trees and is bounded on one side by a row of modest houses, ranged, shoulder to shoulder, like a company in grey. The buildings at the principal end are supported upon arches with sturdy old pillars which give the spot an air of mystery. On the other side of the square a double flight of stairs mounts pompously to the castle. The square is approached by a lane which, to add to the fantastic character of the Place, pops out unexpectedly through the base of the church tower.

There was a time, long ago, when life in Cagnes was very gay and when, indeed, Cagnes' society was so lively and so exuberant as to bring down upon the inhabitants a crushing reproof from the bishop of Vence. The reprimand was conveyed to the young men and women of Cagnes in a message of great harshness in which were unfeeling references to the pains of hell. This was in





CAGNES : THE TOWN GATE.



## Cagnes and St. Paul du Var

1678. It appeared that the people of Cagnes had a passion for dancing, a passion almost as uncontrolled as the craze of the present day. They danced in the streets, the bishop stated. As there are no level streets in Cagnes it is probable that the Place Grimaldi was the scene of this display of depravity. The young people seem to have favoured a kind of mediæval tango, for the bishop said some very unpleasant things to the ladies of Cagnes about their "indelicate postures and embraces." As to the male dancers they are described as "*forcenés*"; so they may be assumed to have introduced into these street dances some of the violence and surprises of the madhouse.

The dancing took place, of course, principally on a Sunday and the dancers excused themselves to the bishop by saying that the church was so exceedingly dirty that they did not care to enter it and, therefore, there was nothing for them to do on the Sabbath but either to sit in the shade and yawn or to dance in the streets.

The bishop, who was clearly very "down upon" Cagnes, was severe too on the subject of the ladies' dress, or rather lack of dress. He especially found fault with the low-necked costume and affirmed that women had been seen in church "with bare throats and chests and without even a kerchief or scarf to veil them." It would be interesting to know what the bishop of Vence would say about the low-necked dress of to-day, which is carried down to the diaphragm in front and to the base of the spinal column behind.

The castle of Cagnes stands at the top of the town on a wide platform from which can be obtained a view of the sea, on the one hand, and of the snow-covered

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

mountains on the other. This is a castle of the great Grimaldi family. It dates, Mr. MacGibbon<sup>1</sup> says, from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and is claimed to be the finest specimen of a mediæval stronghold in this part of France. It is simply a vast, square keep, as solid as a cliff and as grim as a prison. It is heavily machicolated below the parapet. It is frankly ugly, brutal and repellent, an embodiment of frightfulness, a frown in stone.

It is said that the great hall of the château possesses a ceiling painted by Carlone in the seventeenth century. The fresco represents the Fall of Phæton. The present state of this work of art is doubtful, for in 1815 the castle was occupied by Piedmontese soldiers who, lolling on sofas and divans, amused themselves by firing at the head of Phæton and apparently with some success.

The castle has, however, been disfigured in such a way as to render it pitiable and ridiculous. At some period huge modern windows have been cut in its fearsome walls. These windows, brazen and aggressive, have all the assurance of the windows of a pushing boarding house and to sustain that character are furnished with sun-shutters and lace curtains. The worst phase of this outrage is the cutting away of some of the glorious machicolations in order to make room for the blatant plate glass. This superb old castle, in its present plight, can only be compared to the figure of a sun-tanned and scarred veteran with a helmet on his grey head and a halberd in his hand and on his breast, in the place of the steel cuirass, a parlourmaid's pinafore trimmed with lace.

<sup>1</sup> "Architecture of Provence," 1888.



CAGNES : THE PLACE GRIMALDI.





CAGNES: THE CASTLE.





## Cagnes and St. Paul du Var

ST. PAUL DU VAR, on the way between Cagnes and Vence, affords a vivid realisation of the fortified town of the middle ages. It is but little altered and that only on the surface. Its fortifications, laid down in 1547, are still quite complete. Its circle of ramparts is unbroken. There are still the old gates, the towers, the bastions and the barbicans. The path along the parapet that the sentry patrolled is undisturbed. One almost expects to hear his challenge for the password. The town is as ready to withstand the attack of an army of bowmen or of halberdiers as it ever was. It might even defy cannon if they were as small and as weak as the old piece of ordnance that still occupies the battery by the main gate.

The streets are disposed as they were in the days of the leathern jerkin and the farthingale. There are more houses of obvious antiquity in the place than will be seen in any town of its size in Provence. The hand of improvement has of course passed clumsily over them. Whitewash can wipe out the past and it has done much in this way in St. Paul. If the stone wall of a house has become too rugged and worn it can be covered up with plaster and paint. If the balcony crumbles away its balustrade can be used in the fowl-house and can be replaced by something in cheap iron from a shop in Nice. When the stone chimney falls down a tin stovepipe can fill the void. If the Gothic window be too small it is easy to make a fine square opening that will take lace curtains and be worthy of Bermondsey, and when the oak door, whose black nails have been fumbled over by ten generations of boys and girls, has become shabby a door of deal, painted green and varnished and provided with a brass knocker will make the whole town envious.

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

Still, in spite of all these sorry evidences of advance with the times, the town of St. Paul remains a rare relic worthy (if it were possible) to be placed bodily in a museum, for it is a museum specimen.

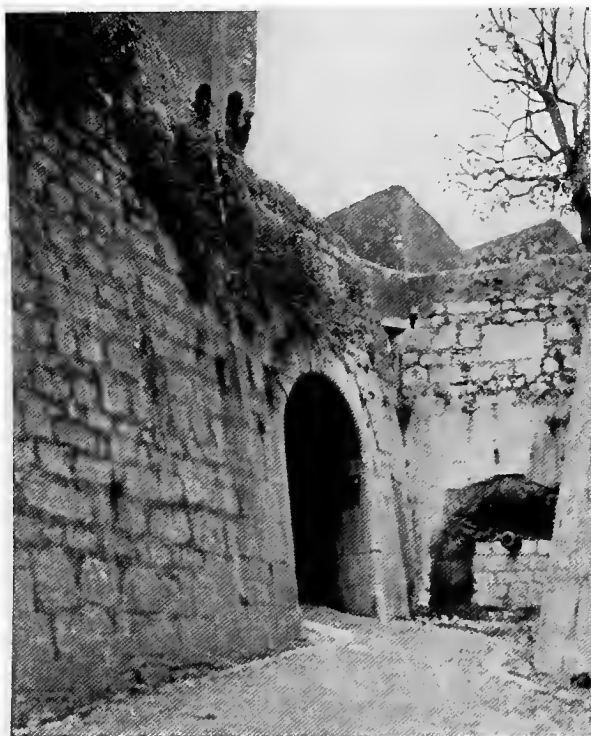
The visitor enters the town through the vaulted passage of the main gate and then makes his way by the inner guard and under a tower, with a channel for the portcullis, into the town. It is a rather terrifying entry that belongs to the old days of romance. A gateway that the reader of heroic tales has passed through, in imagination, many a time. It should be held with flashing swords by such men as the Three Musketeers, by Athos, Porthos and Aramis, but at the moment it is obstructed only by an aged woman with a perverse and overburdened donkey.

The town is quiet and clean, full of picturesque lanes, of quaint corners and of odd passages. As it was at one time a favourite resort of the nobles of the country and at all times a place of much dignity it contains still many houses with handsome stone staircases and elaborate chimney-pieces; while over door after door will be found carved the armorial bearings of old world tenants. The dates above many entries go back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Some of the old wooden doors still standing are most beautiful, while examples of ancient windows and of ancient archways are very numerous.

In St. Paul du Var will be seen, in almost every street, examples of the little shop of the Middle Ages. Under a wide arch or in a square opening will be found a door approached by a step and by the door a window. The window only reaches to the level of the middle of the door. It there ends in a stone counter upon which



ST. PAUL DU VAR.



ST. PAUL DU VAR: THE ENTRY.





ST. PAUL DU VAR: THE MAIN GATE.



## Cagnes and St. Paul du Var

the goods for sale were displayed. The window (which is, of course, not glazed) is closed by a shutter. Both shutter and door are usually studded with heavy nails. These curious little establishments are no longer used as shops, but through them the dwelling is still entered.

On the summit of the town is the church and, close to it, two great, square towers of the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries. The taller of these is the belfry of the church, while the more sturdy is the tower of the town. They are both severely plain and fine specimens of the period to which they belong.

The church dates from the same era as the towers and is—as regards its interior—one of the most beautiful churches in Provence and certainly one of the most interesting. Among its notable features are certain altar screens of exquisitely carved wood which date from between the fifteenth and the seventeenth centuries. The chapel of St. Clement the Martyr, completed in 1680, is a magnificent work of art, full of details of great merit. It is classed as a national monument. On the north side of the church is a bust of Saint Claire, carved in wood, a work of the sixteenth century. It represents the head of a young woman with a singularly beautiful and pathetic face. It is a haunting face, for whenever the church of St. Paul is recalled to mind this face at once comes back among the shadows of its aisles.

There is in the sacristy a collection of treasures which has made the church famous throughout France. It includes marvellous crucifixes in silver, silver statuettes of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, a *tabernacle portatif* and numerous old reliquaries, one of which—very curious in shape—contains the shoulder-bone of St. George.

### XIII

#### CAP FERRAT AND ST. HOSPICE

**C**AP FERRAT is the name of a narrow tongue of land which is suddenly thrust out into the sea between Villefranche and Beaulieu. It is one of the great landmarks along the coast, is nearly a mile in length and rises at one point to the height of 446 feet. It is a peninsula of rock covered with trees and forms a pleasant strip of green athwart the blue expanse of water. At its further end it breaks up into two capes which spread apart like the limbs of a Y. One is Cap de St. Hospice, the other Cap Ferrat.

Cap de St. Hospice is a very humble cape, small and low. All the present dignity of the peninsula belongs to Cap Ferrat, which has a lighthouse on its point and a great hotel, as well as a semaphore on a hill and a number of villas of high quality. Cap de St. Hospice has none of these things; but it possesses a little fishing village, a lonely church, an ancient tower and a wealth of glorious memories. Cap Ferrat is modern. It has no associations; for until the road-maker and the villa builder came it was merely a strip of rough forest. The whole interest of this would-be island centres around the promontory of St. Hospice.

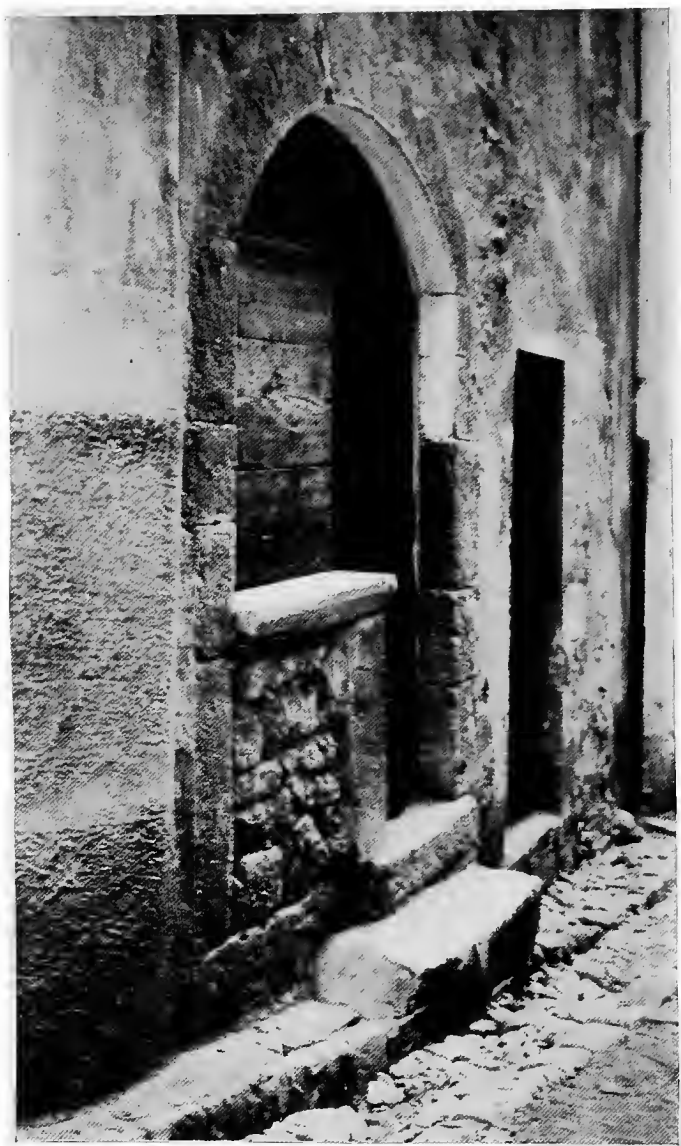
In the early days the land, far and wide, that bordered on the cape was buried in the gloom of paganism. It





ST. PAUL DU VAR: A SIDE STREET.





ST. PAUL DU VAR: A SHOP OF THE MEDIÆVAL  
TYPE.



## Cap Ferrat and St. Hospice

was as dark as a moonless night in winter and as chill. Then, in a certain year, a spark of light appeared on Cap de St. Hospice. It was very small, a mere isolated speck in the overwhelming shadow. It glowed from a humble monastery of a few stone huts which formed the first Christian settlement in this part of the Mediterranean. With the passage of years the spark grew until the darkness about the cape changed to day and the whole country beyond was flooded with a light that men came to know as the Light of the World.

The missionary who established himself upon this remote point of land was St. Hospice or St. Auspicius. He, with only a few followers, planted on the cape, in the year 560, an outpost of the Christian religion. So primitive and crude was the settlement that it was rather an entrenchment than a monastery. Of the rough stone hovels that composed it no trace, of course, exists.

St. Hospice is described as a man, eloquent of speech, whose presence was commanding but whose heart was that of a child. He had the gift of prophecy and the power of working miracles. He foretold the coming of the Lombards and saw, as in a vision, the desolation that they would leave in their track. He warned his converts to seek safety in strong places and to take their goods with them. As for himself, when the news reached Cap Ferrat in 572 that the Lombards had crossed the Col di Tenda, he shut himself up in an old deserted tower on the crest of the cape and—like St. Paul—hoped for the day.

When the barbarians arrived they were convinced that the tower, which was so closely shut, must be the hiding place of treasure. One of the robbers at once climbed

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

to the top of the stronghold and peeped over. He found it roofless and, looking down into the depth, saw not coffers filled with silver and gold but a solitary man, emaciated and in rags, sitting on the bare stones. They assumed him to be a miser who had vast wealth buried beneath the flags on which he crouched. With violent hammer blows they broke down the door and effected an entry.

The captain of the gang pushed through the opening and, confronting the silent figure on the ground, demanded who he was and where his hoard was concealed. To this the supposed man of wealth replied, "I am a murderer. There is no crime that I am not guilty of, and with each misdeed I have crucified anew the Son of God." This was a dark saying very hard to understand. The Lombard, although himself a practised murderer, felt that he was in the presence of a criminal of unusual virulence, of a malefactor whose wickedness was even riper than his own. His moral sense was shocked by this revolting creature crouching on the earth, and moved by an impulse of justice he proceeded to kill him. This was in accord with the routine procedure adopted by Lombards in all cases of doubt. "He raised his weapon to strike a deadly blow on the criminal's head, but, to the horror of all present, his arm remained dry and stiff in the air and the weapon fell heavily to the ground."<sup>1</sup>

This terrible occurrence filled those who had crowded into the tower with shivering dread. They feared that they too might be punished in this mysterious and abrupt manner. They felt their limbs all over to see if they

<sup>1</sup> "Mentone," by Dr. George Müller, 1910.

## Cap Ferrat and St. Hospice

were still sound, looked at the placid figure on the floor with awe and finally fell down upon their knees and implored mercy and forgiveness. St. Hospice now arose, touched the withered arm, made over it the sign of the cross and uttered some fervent words. At once the limb became whole again.

So vivid was the impression made upon these rude men that two officers and many of the company expressed a desire to be baptised then and there. They never dreamt that the expedition would end in this way. They had come to plunder and burn, not to be baptised. Those outside the tower who had not seen the demonstration accomplished by the supposed criminal promptly retreated. They were unfortunately met on the way by a body of Ligurians who fell upon them and killed them. The attack on Cap Ferrat thus proved a failure and the Lombards viewed the peninsula with such mistrust that they left it in peace.

St. Hospice continued to live in the old tower as a hermit, beloved and revered by all. In this tower he died in the year 580 and under the grass at the foot of the tower he was buried. Some vestiges of this Tower of the Withered Arm were still to be seen as late as 1650, but at the present day no trace of it is to be discovered.

A sanctuary, in the form of a little chapel, was erected by the side of the tower to keep green the memory of the saint. It is mentioned in a Bull issued by Pope Innocent II in 1137. It was repaired by Charles Emmanuel II, Duke of Savoy, about 1640 and was dignified by an inscription in marble. Of this memorial chapel also no vestige now exists.

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

In later years, when the Saracens came, they established a fortress—Le petit Fraxinet—on Cap de St. Hospice and during the troubled centuries that followed the promontory was strongly fortified and was the scene of many assaults and numerous bombardments. Of these strongholds not a stone is now standing, save alone the Emmanuel Philibert Tower, of which an account is given on p. 110. Between the years 1526 and 1528 the cape was occupied by the Knights of St. John who rendered great service during the famine of 1527 and promoted, in many ways, the commerce along the coast.

There is a curious legend of the cape which relates to the time of the saint, for it belongs to the year 575 when St. Hospice was still living in his old roofless tower. It is the Legend of the Stream of Blood.

On a certain day a party of honest folk—villagers and monks—started from Cap Ferrat to walk up to Eze. Their purpose was peaceful and indeed they seem to have been merely taking a stroll. When the evening came they had not returned. They were never to return; for, as they climbed up the cliff, they were set upon by a gang of miscreants and murdered to a man. Plunder was not the object of the attack, for the victims were poor but they were disciples of St. Hospice and the religion taught by that good man was held in abhorrence by the profane. As no trace of the murderers was ever discovered it is assumed that they were agents of the devil and that they had come direct from the bottomless pit on this especial mission.

On the following morning some fishermen were starting in their boats from the cove where now stands the village of St. Jean. The morning was calm. The





CAP DE ST. HOSPICE.



ST. HOSPICE: THE MADONNA AND THE TOWER.



## Cap Ferrat and St. Hospice

sea was smooth as a mirror and as blue as the petals of the gentian. The boatmen were amazed to see a crimson stream coming towards them on the surface of the deep from the direction of Eze. It was a stream, narrow and straight, and as clear in outline as a ribbon of scarlet satin drawn across a sheet of blue ice. As they approached it they were horrified to perceive that it was blood, warm blood, thick and gelatinous looking. It smelt of fresh blood and from it rose a sickly steam.

As the men drew nearer the red streak began to recede in the direction whence it came. They followed it. It led them to the beach at Eze. They landed and saw before them the rivulet of blood trickling, in slow, glutinous ripples, over the stones. It withdrew to the foot of the cliff. They followed and as they advanced the stream still retreated. Looking up they could see it coming down the path as a thick red band, with clots hanging here and there from the steps and from low-lying brambles. As they mounted up the cliff the stream withdrew before them.

Finally the fishermen came to a mossy ledge, where they found the bodies of the dead villagers lying in a tangled heap. Beneath them was a cross which they had never seen before. They proceeded at once to bury the victims of this wicked outrage. The ground about was rocky; but, as they dug, the rock softened and became as sand. They left the cross as they had found it and, after offering up a prayer for those who had passed away, they walked silently down the path to their boats.

St. Jean is a little place that hangs about a tiny harbour full of fishing boats. It is quite modern or at

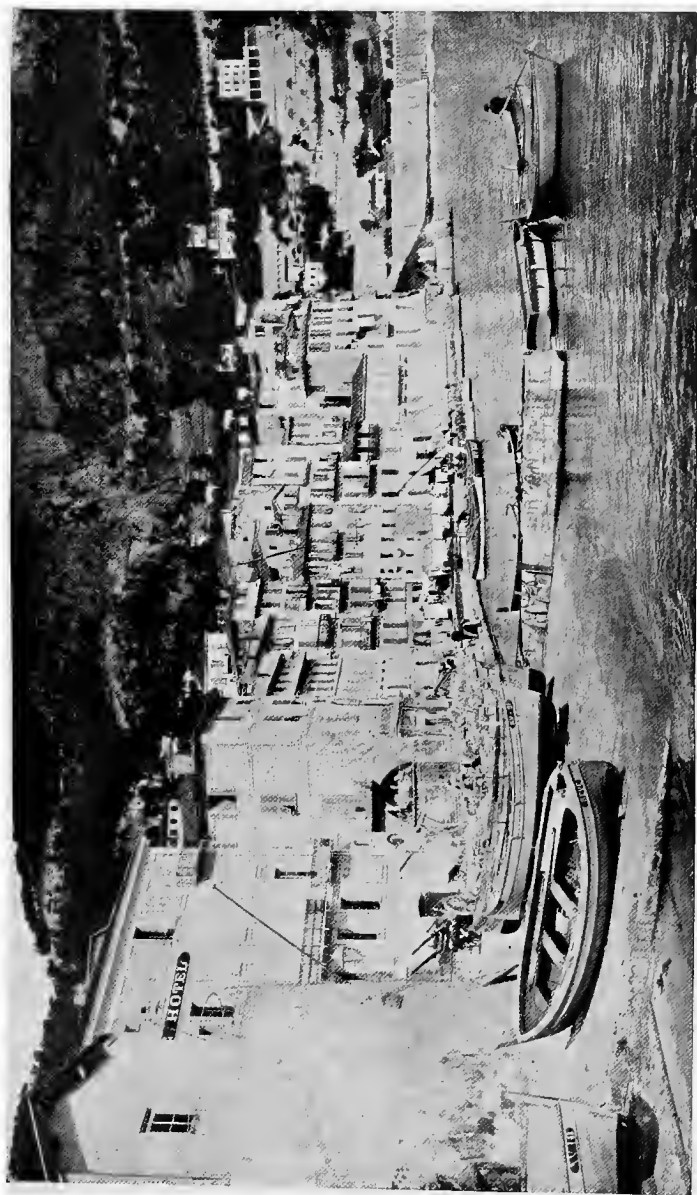
## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

least all that part of it that is presented to the eye belongs to the period of to-day. It is popular because it is supposed to be a fisher village away from the world, and those who live in towns love fisher villages, since they suggest a picturesque quietness, a place of nets and lobster pots and of sun-tanned toilers of the deep, a primitive spot where people live the simple life in vine-covered cottages.

Now there is little of the fisher village about St. Jean, not even the smell. There are certainly nets and boats and an appropriate brawniness about the people; but the fisher village element is wanting. St. Jean is, in fact, a popular resort for the humbler type of holiday folk, a place they can reach in the beloved tram and where they can eat and drink and be merry. The whole quay front is occupied by bars, cafés and restaurants, where *langouste* can be enjoyed and that rare dish the *bouillabaisse* which is claimed to be a speciality of the place.

St. Hospice would not approve of St. Jean in its present guise and could he find the way back to his tower he would be horrified by the placards of "American drinks" and "Afternoon teas." There is no missionary spirit abroad in St. Jean, nothing of the old monastic life. The early morning fishermen would never again expect to see a stream of blood creeping over the tide. St. Jean, in fact, is no longer adapted for miracles; while its romance goes little beyond the romance of a lunch in the open air by a harbour side.

Beyond St. Jean is the point of Cap de St. Hospice, a low, rocky promontory covered with firs, olive trees and cactus. On the extremity of the cape is the tower erected by Emmanuel Philibert, Duke of Savoy, in 1561.



VILLEFRANCHE.



## Cap Ferrat and St. Hospice

It is a structure in yellowish stone, plain, round and squat, with a few emplacements for small guns on its summit and a few narrow slits in its uncompromising flanks. It is as insolent and as defiant a structure as can be imagined. By its side is placed a most astonishing object—a newly-made statue of the Virgin, some 28 feet in height and nearly as tall as the tower itself. The statue stands on the grass facing the east, is of a bilious tint but otherwise unpainted. Few more incongruous things have ever been brought together in this world. The statue is so very modern, so artificial and so frail; while the tower is so old, so primitive and so coarse in its braggart strength. The statue, it appears, was provided by the subscriptions of the faithful, but want of funds or want of purpose has prevented its being placed on the top of the tower where it was intended that it should ultimately stand.

The tower has walls of enormous thickness. An upper story can be reached by a stair and there the visitor will be brought face to face with the most substantial apparition that has ever been found in a mediæval stronghold. He will find himself, when near the roof, confronted by the ashen face of the Madonna, a face as big as a boulder, for the tower is occupied by a model of the statue which is of the same proportions as the stupendous image itself. To complete the anomalies of this remarkable household the ground floor of the tower is occupied by a family surrounded by the amenities of a cave dwelling.

Beyond the tower is the chapel of St. Hospice. It is a humble, barn-like little church with a roof of red tiles and a bell gable. It is comparatively modern, for

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

it has been in existence for just one hundred years. It is only opened once annually—viz. on October 16th—for the celebration of the Mass.

The spot on which it may reasonably be assumed that the monastery of St. Hospice stood is occupied by a café-restaurant where dancing is indulged in on Sundays and holidays to the music of a pianola. One wonders what the saint—who was eloquent and forcible of speech—would say if he could visit again the cape that bears his name.

There are some half-buried fragments of old walls on the promontory, and these the imaginative man, if free from scruples, can assume to belong to whatever building and whatever period in the history of the place he may particularly affect.

From the point of the spit is a fascinating view of the mainland and especially of Eze which stands exactly opposite to St. Hospice. La Turbie also can be seen at great advantage. It lies in the col between Mont Agel and the Tête de Chien and marks the place of crossing of the Roman road.

On the coast, on either side of Cap Ferrat, are respectively Beaulieu and Villefranche. Beaulieu is a super-village of sumptuous villas. It lies on an evergreen shelf by the sea, pampered by an indulgent climate, made gorgeous by an extravagant vegetation and provided by all the delights that the most florid house agent could invent. It breathes luxury and wealth, languid ease and a surfeit of comfort. It can be best viewed from the Mid-Corniche road on the way up to Eze. Here the envious can lean over a wall and look down upon Naboth's vineyard, upon a village which is possibly the richest in





VILLEFRANCHE : THE MAIN STREET.



## Cap Ferrat and St. Hospice

Europe and upon gardens whose glory is nowhere to be surpassed.

Villefranche, the harbour town, lies across the blue lagoon. It is as little like Beaulieu as any place could be, for whatever Beaulieu boasts of Villefranche lacks. It is a very ancient town; but it has been so persistently modernised that it has an aspect of the present day. It is like an old face that has been painted and powdered and "made up" to look young. The result as regards the town is like the result as regards the face—an imperfect success; for in the dim lanes of Villefranche are still to be traced the wrinkles of old age, while the grey of its withered stones is still quite apparent even under a toupee of auburn tiles.

There are boats everywhere, not only in the harbour and on the quay but up the streets, where they are being patched and hammered at. The quay is carpeted with nets and among them old women in straw hats are sitting on low chairs repairing broken strands. Ducks are wandering about and against any support that is solid enough a thoughtful mariner is leaning.

At the south end of Villefranche is the citadel, a lusty, rambling fortress built in 1560 by Emmanuel Philibert about the time that he erected the very gallant fort which still stands on the summit of Mont Alban, high above the town. The citadel is now grey and green with age, is much humiliated by certain modern buildings, but still is cut off from the world by a terrifying moat spanned by a timid bridge and is still said to retain in its depths some dreadful dungeons.

Villefranche is on a slope and thus it is that all lanes leading up from the quay are very steep and, indeed, are

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

stairs rather than streets. Some are quite picturesque, especially such as pass under archways and through vaulted passages. There are a bewildering number of bars, cafés and wine-shops along the sea front which bear testimony to that thirst which is a feature in the physiology of the mariner. A well known author has described an English village as made up of "public houses and drawbacks." He would probably speak of Villefranche as a compound of bars and stairs.

One of the most exciting days in the history of Villefranche happened in the year 1523 when "The Great Ship" was launched and when the people either screamed themselves hoarse with elation or were rendered dumb by surprise. This Leviathan of the Deep was built by the Knights Templars. The dimensions of the fearsome vessel have probably grown with the passage of time, but quite temperate historians describe her as possessed of six decks and as furnished with a powder store, a chapel and a bakehouse. She carried a crew of 300 men. Writers with a riper imagination assert that she was covered with lead and that so terrific was her weight that she could sink fifty galleys. Things grow as the centuries pass. It would be of interest to learn to what proportions the ephemeral image of the Virgin, on the opposite cape, will have attained in the next four hundred years.

Villefranche and Cap de St. Hospice are both concerned in the astounding journey that was made by the dead body of Paganini.

Paganini, the immortal violinist, died at Nice on May 27th, 1840, in the Rue de la Préfecture in a house which has been already indicated (page 25). He died



A ROAD IN BEAULIEU.



## Cap Ferrat and St. Hospice

of tuberculosis at the age of 56. His religious opinions appear to have been indistinct and his religious observances even less pronounced. In the closing hours of his life he was denied or failed to receive the last rites of the Church and, after his death, the clergy refused to allow his body to be buried in consecrated ground.

On the day following his decease the coffin was deposited in the cellar of a house near by, a house that stands at the junction of the Rue de la Préfecture and the Rue Ste. Réparate.<sup>1</sup> The cellar was in the possession of a friendly hatter. The body then appears to have been removed to an "apartment" in a hospital at Nice, but the facts at this point in the narrative are confused.<sup>2</sup>

Paganini's son took action against the bishop for refusing to permit the body to be buried within the pale of the Church. In this action young Paganini failed. He appealed against the decision of the clergy and the matter was finally referred to the Papal Court at Rome. Pending judgment the body was taken to Villefranche and placed in a lazaretto there. In about a month the smell emitted by the corpse was complained of and accordingly the coffin was taken out of the building and placed on the open beach near the water's edge.

This gave great distress to the friends of the dead artist and so one night a party of five of them took up the coffin and carried it by torch-light round the bay to the point of Cap de St. Hospice. Here they buried it close to the sea and just below the old round tower which

<sup>1</sup> The house is now a tailor's shop. Neither of these houses is indicated by any tablet or inscription, as has been sometimes stated.

<sup>2</sup> "The Romance of Nice," by John D. Loveland, London, 1911.

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

still stands on this spit of land. Over the coffin was placed a slab of stone. All this happened within a year of the maestro's death.

In 1841 the son decided to take the body from the Cap de St. Hospice and convey it to Genoa, because it was in Genoa that his father was born. Here it was hoped he could be laid at rest. A ship was obtained and the coffin was lifted from the grave near the old tower and placed on the deck. When Genoa was reached the party with the coffin were not allowed to land because the vessel had come from Marseilles and at that port cholera was raging.

The ship thereupon turned back and sailing westwards brought the dead man to Cannes. Here also permission to land a coffin, which was already highly suspected, was refused. The position seemed desperate but near Cannes are the Lerin Islands and among them the barren and lonely rock known as Sainte Ferréol. Here the body was once more buried and again covered with a stone. On this strange little desert island it remained, in utter loneliness, for four years, in the company only of the seabirds and of some blue iris flowers that made the rock less pitiable.

Now it seemed to Achillino Paganini a heartless thing to leave his father's body in this bleak, forsaken spot. The great musician had some property at Parma and it was considered well that the body should be taken there and buried in his own land and in his native Italy. So the dead man was carried away from the island and was buried in a garden in his own country and amid kindly and familiar scenes. This voyage was accomplished without mishap in 1845.



## Cap Ferrat and St. Hospice

For some unknown reason it was determined in 1853 that the body should be re-embalmed. So the coffin was once more dug up and the gruesome ceremony carried out. The wanderings of the dead man had, however, not yet come to an end for in 1876 permission was granted by the Papal Court to lay the body within the walls of a Christian church. So once more the corpse was exhumed and conveyed, with all solemnity, to the church of the Madonna della Staccata in Parma where it was placed in a tomb. By this time no less than thirty-six years had passed since the poor dead master commenced his strange journey.

But even now he had not come upon peace; for in 1893 a certain Hungarian violinist suggested that the body in the church was not that of the adored musician. Thus it happened that once again the corpse was exhumed and once again the coffin opened. The son, who was still alive, permitted an investigation to be made. Those who looked into the coffin saw lying there the form of the man who had enchanted the world. The black coat that he wore was in tatters, but it was his coat. The face, too, they recognised, the gaunt, thin face, the side whiskers and the long hair that fell over the neck and covered the white bones of the shoulder and the gleaming ribs.

## XIV

### THE STORY OF EZE

**E**ZE is a curious name and the name of a still more curious place. Eze, indeed, by reason of its grim history and its astonishing position on a lone pinnacle of rock, is one of the most fascinating towns in the Riviera. Its past has been more tumultuous and more tragic than that probably of any settlement of its size in Provence. It has seen much, has done much and, above all, has suffered much, for its cup of sorrows has been overflowing.

It is a place of extreme antiquity ; since people lived within its rampart of rocks before the dawn of history. Some maintain that the Phoenicians, after expelling these raw natives, fortified Eze, but then that ubiquitous and pushing people seems—at one time or another—to have occupied every place on the seaboard of Europe that can admit of some obscurity in its history.

Certain it is that the Romans when they landed possessed themselves of this town on the cliff and established a harbour in the bay which lies at its foot. When they, in their turn, had embarked in their galleys and sailed away the Lombards appeared, murdered all they could find, burned everything that would burn and robbed to the best of their exceptional abilities. This episode is ascribed to the year 578. The death-rate at

## The Story of Eze

Eze must always have been very high, but during the time that the Lombards were busy in the district it must have risen almost to annihilation.

The Lombards and their kin held on to Eze, in an unsteady fashion, for nearly 200 years and when they had finished with it the Saracens entered upon the scene. These talented scoundrels crept up the cliff in swarms and, with such bloodshedding as the limited material at their disposal would allow, settled themselves upon the point of rock and proceeded to consolidate its position as a den of thieves. This disturbing change of tenancy is said to have taken place in 740 and as the Saracens were not driven from Provence until 980 they were longer in residence than the Lombards. They are credited with having built the castle—or rather the first castle—of Eze. They made slaves of as many of the natives as they could capture, spoke in a strange tongue, made themselves a horror in the land and, in general terms, did inconceivable things. Eze was one of the last strongholds of the Saracens on the Riviera and in order to make the evacuation of the place complete the town was razed to the ground.

After the last Saracens had clattered down the little zigzag path to their boats Eze fell upon still more evil days. It entered upon a period of unease so protracted that for centuries it was never certain of its fate from one day to another. It was taken and retaken over and over again. It was starved into submission at one time and burnt to the rock edge at another. It was occupied now by the Guelphs and now by the Ghibellines. It belonged one year to the House of Anjou and the next to the Counts of Provence. It was at one time a

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

dependency of Naples and at another time of Monaco. It was bartered about like an old hat and sold or bought with a flaunting disregard of the sentiment of the people who were sold with it. Finally in the fourteenth century it was sold to Amadeus of Savoy in whose family it remained—with the exception of twenty-two years during the Revolution—down to its cession to France in 1860.<sup>1</sup>

It was visited by plague and devastated by fever. It had a varied experience of assassination, of poisoning and of modes of torture; while its information on the subject of sudden death and its varieties must have been very full. In order—it would seem—that its knowledge of every form of fulminating violence might be complete it was shaken by earthquake and mutilated by lightning.

The vicissitudes of Eze were indeed many. At one period it was the terror of the coast, supreme in villainy and unique in frightfulness; while, at another time, it was a seat of letters frequented by poets. It had its moments of exaltation as in 1246 when Rostagno and Ferrando, Lords of Eze, had rights over Monaco and Turbia and its moments of misery when it was little more than a howling ruin too bare to attract even a starving robber.

Eze too has seen unwonted folk. Every type of scoundrel that Europe could produce, during the Middle Ages, must, at one time or another, have rollicked and drank and sworn within its walls. The strange troopers who strutted up and down its astonished lanes in the spring would often be replaced by still stranger blusterers before the winter came. During the time that Eze was a favourite resort of pirates it reached its climax in

<sup>1</sup> "The Riviera," Macmillan, 1885.



EZE.



## The Story of Eze

picturesqueness; for then its vaulted passages must have been bright with strange goods, its streets with curiously-garbed captives and its inns filled with seamen who roared forth villainous songs and then fell to fighting with knives over some such trifle as a stolen crucifix or a lady's petticoat.

Southampton is a long way from Eze but, if certain records be reliable, the association of the two sea towns is very close. During the hostilities between France and England, in the time of Edward III, a fleet consisting of 50 galleys—French, Spanish and Genoese—arrived at Southampton in 1338 and landed a large body of men. The fleet was under the general orders of the French admiral, but the Genoese division was commanded by Carlo Grimaldi of Monaco, the famous seaman.

The landing party swarmed over the walls of the town or burst through the gates; they "killed all that opposed them; then entering the houses they instantly hanged many of the superior inhabitants, plundered the town and reduced great part of it to ashes."<sup>1</sup> According to Stowe, in his "Annals," this very effective assault took place at "nine of the clock" and the townsmen ran away for fear. "By the breake of the next day," adds Stowe, "they which fled, by help of the country thereabout, came against the pyrates and fought them; in which skirmish were slain to the number of 300 pyrates, together with their captain, a young soldier the King of Sicilis son." The entry into the town was made at the lower end of Bugle Street.

<sup>1</sup> John Ballar, "Historical Particulars relative to Southampton," 1820. John Stowe, "Annals," London, 1631. J. S. Davies, "History of Southampton," 1883.

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Now it is stated that the marauding party that attacked Southampton was composed, for the most part, of men from the Genoese division of the fleet and that the assault was led and the looting directed by Carlo Grimaldi in person. Grimaldi's share of the plunder was so substantial that on his return to Monaco he purchased with the money the town of Eze in 1341.

It thus comes to pass that some of the savings of honest Hampshire citizens have been invested at one time in this very unattractive property.



## XV

### THE TROUBADOURS OF EZE

**A**BOUT the beginning of the thirteenth century there lived at Eze two troubadours, Blacas and Blacasette by name, father and son. They were Catalans by birth; but the family had settled in Provence and the two singers found themselves in the suite of Raymond Berenger, the Count of Provence. How it was that they came to Eze and how long they resided there is not known. Durandy states that the Blacas were owners of the manor of Eze and in describing the sack of the town in 1543 he speaks of the castle as "the castle of the Blacas."<sup>1</sup>

Certain it is that they were both men of position and were both much esteemed. Blacas, his biographer asserts, was admired more for "the nobleness of his manners" than for the merit of his poems.<sup>2</sup> The two of them wrote and dreamed of love and of fair women, of gardens and green fields. They formed for themselves a little literary circle, as if they were living in Old Chelsea, held Courts of Love and meetings with their poet friends in which they competed with one another. Indeed the first known poem of Blacas (written before

<sup>1</sup> Durandy, "Mon Pays, Villages, etc., de la Riviera," 1918.

<sup>2</sup> "Histoire littéraire de la France," t. xix, 1838. Reynouard, "Choix des Poésies orig. des Troubadours," 1816-21.

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1190) was a tanzon with the troubadour Peyrols. A tanzon, it may be explained, was a competition in verse, the rhymers concerned contributing alternate couplets.

For those who are curious as to the kind of poetry that rippled over the walls of Eze I append a verse by Blacas translated into the French of a later period from the Provençal in which it was written.

*“ Le doix et beau temps me plait,  
Et la gaie saison  
Et le chant des oiseaux;  
Et si j'étais autant aimé  
Que je suis amoureux,  
Me ferait grande courtoisie,  
Ma belle douce amie.  
Mais puisque nul bien ne me fait  
Hélas! eh donc que deviendrai-je?  
Tant j'attendrai en aimant  
Jusqu'à ce que je meure en suppliant,  
Puisqu'elle le veut ainsi.”*

The picture of a troubadour writing little love ditties in this most woeful place is as anomalous, and indeed as incongruous, as the picture of a lady manicuring her hands during the crisis of a shipwreck. The sound of these songs as they floated—like a scented breeze—down the lanes of the putrid town must have been interrupted, now and then, by the shriek of a strangled man in a cellar or the shout of the trembling watchman on the castle roof.

The two troubadours loved war. Blacasette penned



EZE : THE MAIN GATE.

The scene of the treachery of Gaspard de Caïs.



## The Troubadours of Eze

enthusiastic verses about it. He thought it an excellent pursuit, a measure much to be desired, a thing of which it was impossible to have too much. Had he lived at the present day he would probably have modified his views. He was, however, no mere dreamer. He carried his theories into practice and took to fighting when he could. He was engaged in the war which, in 1228, Raymond Berenger waged against the independent towns of Avignon, Marseilles, Toulon, Grasse and Nice. He came out of the fray alive, for he did not die until some time between the years 1265 and 1270.

Blacas was married. His wife was Ughetta de Baus. The marriage came to an abrupt end; for one day Ughetta walked off with her sister Amilheta, entered a convent and took the veil. This precipitate step caused Blacas considerable distress, for he is described as being "plunged in profound sorrow."

Ughetta was probably not to blame; for Blacas as a husband and at the same time a troubadour must have been very trying. From a professional point of view he loved women as a body. That was a part of his business and no doubt Ughetta became tired of his violent and continual ravings about women with whom she was but slightly acquainted. Moreover her home life in Eze must have been very unsettled. Blacas would one day be humming songs about a new lady at the dinner table and the next day he would be turning the house upside down in order to hold a Court of Love; while, perhaps, on the third morning he would be off to a war he had just heard of. Ughetta no doubt talked this over with her sister—who may possibly have married a troubadour herself—and the two came to the conclusion that the

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quiet of a convent would be a pleasant change after life with a crazy poet in Eze.

Blacasette—who wrote with facile elegance—was more fortunate than his father. He fell harmlessly in love with a *grande dame* or imagined that he had and most of the poems of his that survive are amatory sonnets devoted to his “sweet lady.” The position was made awkward by the fact that the sweet lady was already married and was, moreover, the wife of no less a person than Blacasette’s master, Raymond Berenger. Nothing, of course, came of this. The lady remained unmoved and was probably much bored by the receipt of these florid effusions; while the troubadour did not feel called upon to retire to a monastery, nor to take any action that was excessive. In fact the love-making was purely academic and little more than a display in verse making.

The “sweet lady” was truly a *grande dame*, for she was the famous Beatrix of Savoy. She married in 1219 and had four remarkable daughters, the most illustrious bevy of girls of almost any age. One, Beatrix, succeeded her father and became the Countess of Provence; another, Eleanor, married Henry III of England; a third, with the pretty name of Sancia, married King Henry’s brother, Richard, Duke of Cornwall; while Marguerite—the fairest of them all—became the wife of Louis IX.

## XVI

### HOW EZE WAS BETRAYED

**I**N August, 1543, the citadel of Nice was besieged by the French army of Francis I aided by the Turkish fleet under the command of the corsair Barbarossa. The siege failed as has been already recounted (page 29). The next obvious step for the French was to attack and destroy Eze, which lay behind Nice and was an obstacle to any further progress. It is necessary to realise that—at this period—both Nice and Eze were beyond the frontiers of France, were foreign towns and, at the moment, enemy towns.

The Turkish fleet, supplemented by many French galleys, accordingly set sail for the Bay of Eze, carrying with it irregular troops, both French and Turkish, to the number, it is said, of 2,000. Now Barbarossa, being a finished pirate of ripe experience, would be aware that the taking of Eze from the sea was—as a military project—quite impossible. Eze stood on a cone of rock 1,400 feet above the level of the Mediterranean and could only be reached from the shore by a narrow path which was actually precipitous. To bring cannon to bear upon the town from any point, high or low, on either side of it, was impracticable. It could only be taken by a body of infantry and to the attacks of such a force Eze was impregnable.

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Still Redbeard the pirate sailed on with complete content. He was not only content ; he was happy. He had a treasure in his galley, a treasure in the form of a man who was probably sitting alone in the pirate's cabin, deep in thought. Barbarossa would take a peep at him now and then, rub his hands and smile. The name of this man was Gaspard de Caïs and he was one of the most poisonous scoundrels that had ever lived. He was a native of the country the admiral was proceeding to invade. He was a loathsome traitor who had gone over to the French and, for a certain sum, had engaged to betray his country and the town of Eze together with friends among whom he had spent his youth. The bribe might have been large but, valued as a really corrupt ruffian, Gaspard was beyond price.

When the Bay of Eze was reached this sneaking hound was landed with a few French and Italian soldiers—Italian because they spoke a language more akin to the speech of Eze. Barbarossa would like to have kicked the knave off the boat but he was not a censor of morals and he wanted to take the town.

De Caïs and his small company proceeded to climb up to Eze. It was September and, therefore, one of the hottest months of the year. What with the heat and the burden of his conscience Gaspard must have found the ascent trying ; for even in modern times with a modern path the clamber up to the town from the shore is a feat of endurance that the hardiest tourist will scarcely undertake twice.

In due course the perspiring traitor reached the gate of Eze—the identical gate that stands before the entrance of the town to this day. He would be stopped by the



## How Eze was Betrayed

guard and asked his business. Mopping his face he would reply, with a smile, that he wished a word with the governor. After some delay the governor, attended by an officer or two, appeared and Gaspard, greeting him as an old comrade, whispered in his ear that the Turkish fleet was in the Bay and would attempt to take the town. This was possibly the only time that Gaspard ever spoke the truth; for, in fact, the fleet was below and the admiral did undoubtedly desire to capture the town. De Caïs then lapsed into lying which became him better. He explained that as a patriot and a lover of Eze he had come to warn the governor of the peril ahead and to place his poor services and those of his humble followers at the disposal of the garrison. "Would he come in?" He came in.

Now it must be explained that Gaspard had as a friend and co-partner in crime no less a person than his fellow countryman, the Lord of Gorbio. This prince was known by the unpleasing name of the Bastard of Gorbio for he was a disreputable scion of the noble house of Grimaldi. He was, if possible, a more contemptible rogue than Gaspard. He had confederates in Eze and a number of traitorous men in his pay hidden among the rocks about the entrance.

As soon as Gaspard de Caïs and his companions were well within the gate they suddenly drew their swords and, with a shout, fell like madmen upon the unsuspecting guard who were still standing at attention. This was a signal to the Bastard and to his friends within and without the town. These worthies all rushed to the gate and in a few moments the governor and the gallant guard of Eze were dead or dying.

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All this time the Turks, in single file, were crawling up the zigzag path from the boats, like a great brown serpent, a mile long, gliding up out of the water. They poured in through the gate, panting and yelling, and continued to pour in for hours. Barbarossa now could laugh aloud and did no doubt guffaw heartily enough for Eze the impregnable was taken with scarcely the loss of a man.

What followed is, in the language of novelists, "better imagined than described"; simply because it is easy to imagine but difficult to describe.

Eze the betrayed became the scene of a blurred orgy of house burning, murder and pillage. The town with all that was in it was to be wiped off the face of the earth. The order could not have been carried out more thoroughly or more heartily if it had been executed by the Germans of the present day. There was no resistance. There was to be no quarter and no prisoners. Everything went "according to plan."

The narrowness of the lanes rendered the process of hacking a population to death cramped, slow and very horrible. Every street and alley was soon blocked with the dead and the dying. The first clatter of hurrying feet was soon hushed; for those who pressed on and those who fled trod upon yielding bodies. A whole family would be lying dead in an entry; the man at the front, the baby and the mother behind.

Here would be the corpse of a Turk sprawling over the bundle of loot he was in the act of carrying away. Here would be a woman's dead hand cut off at the wrist, but still clinging to the handle of a door. Here a disembowelled man, still alive, trying to crawl into

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a cellar and there a half-charred body dangling from the window of a burning house.

It is always customary to say, in the account of scenes like this, that "the streets ran with blood," but it is not so. The state is far more hideous, since blood clots so soon that it will not run.

The noise must have been peculiarly dreadful, an awful medley of the shouts of men, the shrieks of the butchered, the moans of the dying, mingled with the roaring of flames and the fall of blazing timbers. Now and then, among the din, would be heard the crash of an axe upon a skull, the crack of a sword upon the tense bones of a bent back, the muffled thud of a dagger, the hammer-blow of a club.

The sunlight and the blue of heaven were shut off by a pall of smoke ; while suffocating clouds filled many a lane with the blackness of night.

Such fortifications as could be destroyed were levelled to the ground, and the castle that crowned the hill was blown up by its own magazine. The gate—the fatal gate—was untouched and stands to this day to testify to the supreme villainy of the traitor, Gaspard de Caïs.

The work was well done. Redbeard the pirate may have had his faults, but in the business details of town-sacking he was thorough and singularly expert. When he beached his galleys in the bay, Eze was a prosperous and busy town, living at ease and confident in its strength. When the pirate left it it was a black, smouldering ruin, empty and helpless, stripped of all that it possessed and occupied only by the dead, by such wounded as survived and by the few who, hidden in vaults and secret places, had escaped death from suffoca-

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

tion. There was no need to leave a guard in the town for there was nothing to guard. Eze, as a stronghold had ceased to exist.

After all was over the Turks and their ruffianly allies rattled down the hill to the boats, tired no doubt, blood-bespattered and blackened by smoke, but jubilant and disposed to bellow and sing. Every man was laden with loot like a pack-horse. Even the wounded would grab the shoulder of a friend with one hand and a bundle of booty with the other. They chattered as they stumbled along, chuckling over the "fun" they had had and announcing what they would have done if only they had had more time. Others would be appraising the value of their respective spoils, would draw strange articles half out of their pockets for inspection, or would rub a sticky mess of blood and hair from a vase to see better the fineness of its moulding. They reached the sea without further adventure, boarded their galleys and sailed away towards the East, a proud and happy company, pleased with their day's work and grateful to Allah for his abounding mercies.

It only remains to tell what happened to Gaspard de Caïs and his friend from Gorbio with the unpleasant title. They were, of course, overjoyed by the result of their labours and must have congratulated one another fervently with hearty slaps upon the shoulder. They did not go down the hill to join the ships. They had either been paid in advance for their distinguished service or had got enough loot out of Eze to reward them for their efforts. They had done with Barbarossa and were disposed to do a little now on their own account.

Their action at Eze had been attended with such

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excellent results that they proposed to try the same manœuvre at the gate of La Turbie. So Gaspard and the Lord of Gorbio started in high spirits for this well-to-do little town. They were to approach it as friends. They were to warn the governor that the Turks were coming and were to offer their patriotic services as they had done at Eze. They had with them a substantial body of men—blackguards all of the first water—among whom were no doubt some of Barbarossa's crew who had reached the hill too late to make a really good bag. Indeed La Turbie was to be Eze over again.

The two gentle traitors, having hidden their men near by, advanced to the gate of the town as the night was falling. Unhappily for them the governor had been secretly warned of their coming and of their methods for helping their fellow countrymen. The result was that they were received, not with gratitude, but with bullets and stones.

They fled and, as it was dark, made good their escape. The Bastard of Gorbio took refuge in a church. There he was found and seized by two brave priests, Gianfret Mossen of Eze and Marcellino Mossen of Villefranche. Gaspard de Caïs hid in a cave. He also was discovered and arrested. Very probably his colleague from Gorbio revealed his hiding place to those who were in pursuit. Anyhow these two snivelling ruffians were both marched off to the Castle at Nice where they were tried for high treason, convicted and sentenced to death.<sup>1</sup>

According to one account Gaspard was drawn and quartered and the Bastard of Gorbio was hanged; while

<sup>1</sup> "Mentone," by Dr. George Müller, London, 1910. Durante's "History of Nice," Vol. 2, p. 313.

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another record states that De Caïs was broken on the wheel and that his friend committed suicide in his cell. It matters little which account is true. They both came to a fitting end and passed out into the darkness with the curses of their countrymen ringing in their ears.

With the sacking and massacre of 1543 the story of Eze comes to an end. It ceased to be a town to reckon with, to be cajoled or threatened, to be bought or sold. It became a place of no account and has remained humble and unhonoured ever since. The walls were not restored, the fortifications were not remade and the castle was allowed to crumble into dust. He who was Lord of Eze was lord over a hollow heap of tainted ruins and his title was as much a shadow as was his town.

The new Eze, which in course of time came into being, had its foundations set upon the ruins of 1543. The castle appears to have been more completely dismantled in 1604. On February 23rd, 1887, the earthquake which destroyed Castillon—a place singularly like Eze in its position—did some damage to the hapless town and also to its castle. But it would seem as if the forces of both heaven and earth were conspiring to rid the world of this battered and ill-omened house, for in the terrific storm of May, 1887, its remaining walls were so split by lightning that the arrogant old stronghold was reduced to the mean condition in which it is found to-day.



A STREET IN EZE.





## XVII

### THE TOWN THAT CANNOT FORGET

**A**MID the deep valleys and the titanic ridges of bare rock which slope down to the sea from the Alps stands Eze. It stands alone in a scene of wild disorder. From a huge gash in the flank of the earth, lined with trees as with grass, rises a pinnacle of rock, a solitary isolated bare pinnacle, 980 feet high, with sides sheer as a wall. It rises, clear and grey, out of the abyss and on its summit is Eze. It seems as if some fearful power had lifted the town aloft for safety; while, to compare the stupendous with the trivial, it tops the cone like a tee-ed ball.

The most impressive view of Eze is obtained from the road that leads from La Turbie to Cap d'Ail, at about the time of the setting of the sun. It is then seen from afar as a tiny town on a crag among a tumbled mass of mountains which lie deep in shade. It is the only sign of human habitation in the waste. The sun shines full upon it.

Against the dark background of pines it appears as a brilliant object in silver grey. Its houses, its church and its castle are as clean cut as a many-pointed piece of plate lying upon folds of dark green velvet. No visible road leads to it. It looks unreal, like a town in an allegory, such a town as Christian saw in the Pilgrim's

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

Progress, such a little city as is graved upon the background of an old print by Albert Dürer.

Eze is approached only from the north, from the side towards the Corniche Road. Viewed from this nearer point it suggests a small Mont St. Michel rising out of the land instead of the sea. The town seems a part of the rock. It is not at once apparent where the rock ends and the dwellings begin, for they are all of the same tint and substance. It is easy, from the highroad, to pass the town by without perceiving it, for its "protective colouring" is so perfect and its camouflage so apt that it may be taken for the notched summit of the rock itself.

A closer inspection shows walls dotted with dark apertures. These are windows; but they suggest the black nest-holes that sand-martins make on the face of a cliff. There are faint touches of colour too, a heap of rust-tinted roofs, a grey church tower, a splash of red to mark the nave, the brown ruin of a castle like a broken and jagged pot, a tiny ledge of green with a line of white stones to mark the burying place.

A zigzag path mounts up to an arched gateway in the face of the wall. It is the only entrance into Eze. This portal will admit a laden mule or a hand-cart but not a carriage; for no "vehicle" can find admittance into this exclusive town. A curve of smoke alone shows that it is inhabited. In the distance is the blue Mediterranean lying in the sun.

Before entering Eze it is well to remember that it is an ancient place in the last stages of decrepitude and decay and that it has had a terrible history and centuries of sorrow. It is poor, half empty and partly ruinous.

## The Town that Cannot Forget

Those who expect to find a mediæval fortress will be disappointed since its houses differ but little from such as exist in many an old neighbouring town; while those who are unaware of its past may adopt the expression of a tourist I met, leaving the rock, who informed his friend—as a piece of considered criticism—that Eze was “a rotten hole.” Such a man would, no doubt, describe Jerusalem also as “a rotten hole.”

The gate of Eze—the Moor’s Gate as it is still called—is supported by a double tower with evil-looking loopholes. It is very old and very worn. Its machicolations are covered with ferns which make its harsh front almost tender. Within this entry is another gate and a second tower upon which is a commonplace house reached by a flight of steps. Here we stand in an ancient feudal fortress. Here is the station of the guard and here has taken place such hand-to-hand fighting and such slaughter of men as should make the walls shudder to all eternity. It was here that the stand was made by the faithful garrison when the last siege of Eze took place, the siege led by Barbarossa in 1543. It was at this very gate that the traitor Gaspard de Caïs parleyed with the governor.

Within the second gate is a platform for the inner guard, from the ramparts of which one can look down into the chasm from which Eze arises and judge of the formidable position of the place.

The streets of Eze are mediæval in arrangement being mere alleys—each as narrow as a trench—between the houses. They are paved with cobble stones at the sides and with red bricks in the centre and are lit—such is the anomaly—by electric light. These lanes wander about in an uneasy and disconsolate way. They sometimes

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

mount upwards; they sometimes glide down as if undecided. They dip under houses through black, vaulted ways: they lead to stone stairs that disappear round a corner: they turn warily to the right and then to the left, as if someone followed.

There comes upon the visitor the sense of being lost, of wandering in a nightmare town, of being entrapped in a maze, of never being able to get out again. They are dreadful streets for an ambush and there is many a corner where an assassin in a cloak must assuredly have waited for the unsuspecting step. They are full of ghosts, of reeling, bellowing men rolling down the steep arm in arm, of half-awakened soldiers, buckling on their arms and hurrying to the clamour at the gate, of clinging, terror-stricken women and of the stalwart prince with his solemn guard.

As to the place itself it is a town, tumbled and deranged, made up of rocks and ruins and of melancholy houses of great age. It is a sorrowful town, for Eze is oppressed by the burden of a doleful past and bears on every side traces of its woes and evidences of its manifold disasters. It is a town, it would seem, that can never forget. It is a silent town and desolate. On the occasion of a certain visit the only occupant I came upon was a half-demented beggar who gibbered in an unknown tongue, while the only sound that fell upon the ear was that of a crowing cock. Many of the houses are shuttered close, many are roofless and not a few are without doors. It recalls at every turn the words of Dante of "the steep stairs and the bitter bread."

It is a colourless town for there is nothing to break the ever abiding tint of oyster-shell grey. There are two



EZE: ON THE WAY TO THE CASTLE.



EZE: ALL THAT REMAINS OF THE CASTLE.



## The Town that Cannot Forget

trees in Eze and, in a back yard, a vine. With these exceptions there is hardly a green leaf within its confines. The only thing that grows in Eze is a monstrous and deformed cactus, a bloated and horrible thing covered with prickles. A botanical ogre rather than a plant it seems to be a survival from an extinct age and to belong to a world over whose plains saurians and other obscene reptiles crawled. This senile and unlovely shrub would appear to be appropriate in some way to the poor, sad town that cannot forget.

There is by the way no water in Eze except such rain-water as is collected in tanks by the provident. To obtain water it is necessary to leave the town and journey to the bottom of the path. There, on the road where the carriage of the tourist draws up, is the fountain.

Eze too is a place suggestive of craft and secret doings; a town which might have been planned by a man with a guilty conscience, for it is a veritable rabbit warren in which to burrow or to hide while its shuffling lanes, which dodge so cunningly, would seem to have been devised to favour the panting culprit with justice at his heels.

Rock crops up everywhere. Certain buildings would seem to be compounded of the native rock below and of worked stones above. Caverns are cut out of the cliff as well as curious paths, although some of these now lead nowhere.

There are no two buildings alike. Many may be only a hundred years old, but, in any case, they are incongruous dwellings with windows at odd levels and with doors in unexpected places. There are, on the other hand, buildings which show evidence of greater age and

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

of much distinction. There are towers which have been converted into common habitations and relics of mansions of no little pretence. On a few of these the corbels are still to be seen which once supported the balconies from which fair ladies scattered flowers upon victorious troops tramping up to the castle. There are many fine doorways in stone. Some show traces of the Moorish taste, others belong to the thirteenth century, while a few display the pointed arch of later years. There are some beautiful stone windows and many stoutly worked doors of wood and other odd details which recall a less squalid past. The lounge in the streets of Eze will meet with crypt-like and cavernous stables for goats, cellars open to the sky owing to collapse of the roof, and chilly tunnels without apparent purpose. One or two passages are wide and vaulted and provided with a long stone bench against the wall. Here, in the shadow, soldiers will have sat to clean their arms and old men to gossip.

The public buildings are, of course, few. The *Mairie* is rather pretentiously humble and is the least authoritative building I have ever seen. The post office clings precariously to the side of a steep lane, the Rue du Brek, and looks out upon a wall of rock covered with cactus. It seems incongruous that from this half-unconscious place it is possible both to telegraph and telephone. There is a dejected café but it is closed.

The church is of little interest. It was enlarged and restored—that is to say spoiled—in 1765. It contains, besides a font of the sixteenth century and an old cross, a painting ascribed to the seventeenth century in the left lower corner of which is a picture of Eze as it was. The castle in the picture is intact, is solid, square and arrogant



## The Town that Cannot Forget

looking. It quite overwhelms the jumbled-up little brown-red town at its foot. From the top of the tower floats a red flag with a white cross on it.

The castle is on the highest point of the town and is reached by a path fashioned out of the rock. This is a path with indeed a story to tell, if only it could utter it; if it could but speak of the footsteps it has listened to—the halting feet of men led up to be judged, the trembling feet of men led down to be hanged, the heavy tread of the well-laden robber, the nervous step of the spy, the rustle of the foot of the damosel. Of this castle of the Lords of Eze nothing remains but a wall and a fragment of a vaulted chamber. In the castle yard is a wretched, shamefaced hut on which is painted “*Bar des Touristes.*” It is happily derelict and a victim to the general coma which has spread over Eze, for it is as out of place as a roulette table in a nunnery.

High up on the side of a house on the south of the town is a little old window. It has a rounded arch of weathered stone and is probably the oldest window in Eze, for it follows the mode that we in England call “*Norman.*” It looks across the sea while on the sill is a bunch of scarlet geranium in a broken jar. I like to think that this is the window of Blacas, the troubadour, that he lived in this house on the cliff and that from this casement he poured forth his songs of love and of gallant deeds.

A love song—as I have said—would seem strange in Eze in its old ruffian days. It may seem as strange even now. But love is eternal and so long as men and women walk the alleys of this ancient town it will linger within its walls. All the fiercer passions of Eze have died away

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

—the lust for power, the thirst for revenge, the mad fever for the fray—but love, it would seem, still remains as, possibly, its only heritage; for I came upon a document in the *Mairie* that announced the coming marriage of two young people in Eze. It was not a troubadour's sonnet, it is true; but it served to show that the old lanes near by may still be paths for lovers, that there are still steep places where he may help her down and still a parapet where the two may lean, gaze over the sea and dream.

One walks down the path from the town as one would leave a chamber of death; for Eze is slowly dying, dying like a doddering old man—once the captain of a host—who is breathing his last in a garret, with around him pathetic relics of his virile past and piteous evidences of his present poverty.

## XVIII

### THE HARBOUR OF MONACO

THE history of Monaco from its early days to the time when it came upon peace is a breathless story full of incident, clamour and surprise. It may not be unfitly compared to an account—from moment to moment—of the flights and rebuffs of a football in a long contested game. Now and again the bewildered ball is lost sight of in a *mêlée* of panting men. At another moment it rolls quietly into the open to be at once pounced upon by two furious packs. At times it is “out of bounds” and at peace, only to be thrown again into the fight where it is harried and battered and driven now to this quarter and now to that. Monaco was the ball in the fierce game between the Grimaldi, on the one side, and the powers of the Eastern Mediterranean on the other and in the end the Grimaldi won.

Until about the end of the twelfth century Monaco was merely a lonely rock, almost inaccessible, uninhabited and waterless. Projecting as it does into the sea it afforded so good a shelter for ships that the little bay in its shadow became famous as a harbour of refuge. Fringing the bay was a pebble beach where a galley could be hauled up or a caravel unloaded.

Monaco was known as a port in Roman days. Indeed it was from this unpretentious haven that Augustus Cæsar

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

embarked for Genoa on his way to Rome when his victories in southern Gaul had been accomplished. The departure of the Emperor was, no doubt, a scene of much pomp, made brilliant by many-coloured standards and flashing spears. As the Emperor stepped on board his ship the blare of trumpets and the shout of the troops drawn up on the plain must have been heard far beyond La Turbie.

The boats of Greek and Phœnician traders have made for this harbour and have deposited their strange cargoes here to the amazement of gaping natives. Here in Monaco Bay wild Saracens have tumbled ashore with such unearthly shouts as to cause the sea birds on the rock to rise in one fluttering cloud. The beach too has been lit often enough by a camp fire around which a company of pirates would be drinking and singing, while they waited for the return of the marauding party that had left at dawn.

Although the harbour was often alive with men the rock remained untenanted. I should imagine that the first adventurer to set foot on Monaco would be a Phœnician cabin boy. He would climb the cliff and gaining the summit would explore it with all the curiosity and alert imagination of a boy landed on a desert island.

It is said that in 1078 two pious men, who lived at La Turbie, built on Monaco a tiny chapel to St. Mary. They built it with their own hands and employed, in the making, stones from the Roman monument in their native town. If this be true the only building that for a hundred years stood upon this barren plateau was the child-like chapel, a speck of white on the dark expanse of rock.



CAP D'AIL NEAR MONACO.



## The Harbour of Monaco

In 1191 the Emperor Henry VI granted Monaco to the wealthy and prosperous town of Genoa. The Emperor's rights over this fragment of territory might be questioned, but there was none to gainsay him. His gift was coupled with the requirement that a fortress should be built on Monaco which should be ready to serve the Emperor in his wars with the pestilential people of Marseilles and of other towns in Provence.

In the same year an official party of noble Genoese came to Monaco and formally took possession of the place in the name of their city. It was a solemn occasion; for those who represented Genoa made a ceremonial tour of the rock, carrying olive boughs in their hands. It was, moreover, a trying occasion for the visit was made in the stifling month of June.

Some of the noble commissioners who were stout and advanced in years (as commissioners often are) must have been hauled, dragged and pushed up the cliff side, like so many bulky packages. Burdened as they were with official robes and olive branches, which had to be carried with decorum, they would have found the ceremony very exacting. They did more than merely stumble about on the top of the rock, panting and perspiring and trying to look official under sweltering conditions. They laid down the lines of a fort. It was to be a square fort and very large, with a tower at each of the four angles, and it was to be designed in the Moorish style.

This fort or castle was erected in the year 1215 on the site of the present palace and was provided with a garrison by the Genoese. Outside the fort the rudiments of a town appeared—the first huts and houses of Monaco. That

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

town, therefore, has already passed the seven hundredth anniversary of its foundation.

The harbour of Monaco of to-day is a model harbour as perfect as the art of the engineer can make it. Two stone piers guard the entrance and at the end of each is a lighthouse. There are two wide quays where feluccas and other rakish-looking ships land barrels of wine; while the basin itself can accommodate a fleet of yachts.

This haven which has sheltered the very earliest forms of sea-going ship now shelters—during the regatta season—the latest development of the motor boat and the racing launch. History repeats itself. There was amazement at Monaco when the first hydroplane dropped on to the water by the harbour's mouth: there was amazement also, centuries ago, when the loungers about the beach saw enter the new ship, the astounding vessel that was propelled not by paddles or oars, but by sails.

Above the pebble beach is a modest promenade and a road—the main road to Nice. On the other side of the highway are genial hotels where people lunch and dine out of doors, amid a profusion of white tablecloths and green chairs and where the menu of the day is suspended from the railings.

At the far end of this Boulevard de la Condamine are an avenue of trees and the old Etablissement des Bains de Mer which, even as late as Hare's time, was "much frequented in summer." The Etablissement is now little more than a ghost. The sound of its gaiety has long since been hushed into silence. There is a somewhat frivolous-looking building by the water's edge which has a rounded glass front and some suggestion that it may once have been a palace of delight. It has now



## The Harbour of Monaco

fallen into a state of decrepitude and shabbiness and is given up to quite commonplace commercial uses. It is like a dandy in extreme old age who, dressed in the threadbare clothes which were the fashion a generation ago, still sits on a parade which once was rustling with happy people and which is now as sombre as a cemetery lane.

Opening on to the margin of the harbour is a great gorge, a sudden breach in the earth which serves to separate the sober town of Monaco from the frivolous town of Monte Carlo. It is a strange thing—this ravine. It is deep and full of shadows. Its walls, lit by the sun, are sheer precipices of biscuit-coloured rock, tinted faintly with red as with rust. From every crack and cranny on its towering sides something green is bursting ; while, here and there, a flower, yellow or blue, clings to a ledge like a perching bird.

From the balustrade of a garden on its summit there hang festoons of scarlet geraniums and a curtain of blue heliotrope. Along the bottom of the chasm runs a fussy stream, with a noise like that of many flutes and by its side—among a jumble of rocks, bushes and brambles—an inconsequent path creeps up, out of pure curiosity, since it leads nowhere.

This ravine, as wild and savage as it was a thousand years ago, is a strange thing to find in the middle of a town, for houses crowd about it on either side and press so far forward on its heights that they appear likely to topple into the abyss. A huge railway viaduct crosses its entrance, while its floor slopes to a road where motors and tramcars rattle along, without heed to this quiet nook in the mountain side. It is as incongruous and out of place as a green meadow with buttercups and

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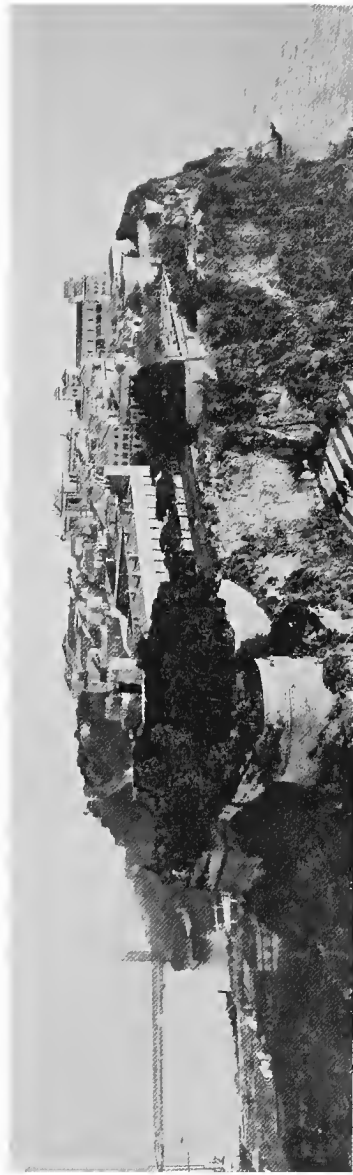
cows spread out by the side of the blatant traffic of Fleet Street.

There are other anomalies about this Ravin des Gaumates. It is so reckless-looking and so theatrical a chasm that one is convinced that duels have been fought here and that here conspirators in cloaks have met, and buccaneers have stored their surprising spoils. At the present day, however, the sea rover's camp is occupied by a laundry shed, where unemotional women, with red arms and untidy heads, are busy; and where, in the place of brigands' loot, sheets are spread upon the rocks to dry, together with white articles of underclothing.

At the mouth of the gorge—standing quite alone—is the little chapel of St. Dévote. It is a humble church, modern, plain as a peasant, and of no intrinsic interest. It is notable only in its position. The building seems to be as surprised at the place in which it finds itself as is the visitor who finds it there. Possibly no more strangely situated house of prayer exists in Europe. Behind it is a wild, disorderly glen; on each side is a precipice and in front is a gigantic railway viaduct of such immoderate proportions that it towers above the very steeple of the church.

The building viewed from the road where the tram-cars run looks like a small shrinking figure enshrined in a niche provided by a vulgar, overbearing and irreverent railway arch.

St. Dévote is the patron saint of Monaco. The celebration held every year in her honour is very picturesque and impressive; for then a long procession winds down from Monaco to the little chapel to do homage to her memory. The legend of St. Dévote takes many forms.



MONACO



## The Harbour of Monaco

The version here given is that which appears to be generally accepted in Monaco.<sup>1</sup>

In the reign of the Emperor Diocletian there lived in Corsica a Christian maiden whose name was *Dévôte*. She was bitterly persecuted for her religion ; but found a friend in Euticius, a senator, who concealed her in his house. Her hiding place was discovered by the Roman prefect who was engaged in the hunting down of Christians. Euticius was killed by poison. *Dévôte* was dragged forth into the street, was mutilated with the utmost brutality and finally expired while undergoing the torture of the “chevalet.” She died praying for the soul of her friend and protector, the noble Euticius.

During the night the body of the martyr was carried down secretly to the seashore by her fellow Christians and placed, with solemn reverence, on board a ship. As the day dawned the ship set sail for the coast of Africa ; but, after a while, a storm burst upon it and drove it, helpless and hopeless, before a fierce wind towards the shores of Gaul.

The captain—one Gratien—felt that the ship was lost. His strength was spent and he gave way to utter despair. As he clung wearily to the helm, dazed and exhausted, a vision of the dead maiden appeared before him as a small, white figure against a curtain of black cloud. She opened her mouth to speak.

“Up ! Gratien,” she said, “the tempest is passing away ; your ship will sail safely into the blue. Watch by me and when you see a dove fly forth from my mouth, follow it with a good heart. It will take you to a quiet haven, called in the Greek, Monaco, and in

<sup>1</sup> “ Monaco et ses Princes,” par Henri Metivier, 1862.

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

the Latin, Singulare. There you will find peace and there, by the beach, bury my body.’’

Her words came true. The wind ceased ; the savage waves dropped into a rippled calm and under an azure sky, made glorious by the sun, the battered boat—bearing the wan maiden on its deck—sailed, like a radiant thing, into a harbour of enchantment. At the mouth of the glen, where the rosemary grew and by the side of the laughing stream the body of the little maid was buried.

## XIX

### THE ROCK OF MONACO

**M**ONACO is a bold, assertive mass of rock—long, narrow and blunt—which thrusts itself out into the sea, as if to show that it held the ocean in contempt and cared nothing for either winds or waves. The sea has tried its strength against it since the world began, but Monaco has ever remained bland and indifferent. The rock is cut off from the mainland by a gorge through which the road to Nice slinks by as if glad to escape. The sides of Monaco are everywhere precipitous, except towards the east. It is from this side only that it can be approached. Its fortifications are very massive and consist of high, unbroken walls which cover the cliff from base to rampart like a cloak. The palace end of the rock has, indeed, the appearance of one gigantic keep. The walls which surround the palace gardens date from 1552 to 1560, while the fortifications that surmount the Rampe belong to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The flanks of Monaco, when neither sheer cliff nor iron wall, are covered with lavish green, for there is not a ledge nor a slope nor a cranny that does not lodge some flower or some shrub.

Access to the town is gained by the Rampe Major, a broad and steep, paved path which has been, in large part, hewn out of the side of the rock. Up and down

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this path there is an endless procession of townfolk and harbour folk, soldiers and priests, schoolboys and girls, hurried officials and gaping visitors. Below the Rampe lies a carriage road up to the town, traversed by a tram line. This way, the Avenue de la Porte Neuve was constructed in 1828. Before that date Monaco could only be reached on foot or on horseback.

Three gates are met with in ascending the Rampe. The first is a ceremonial gate rather than a defence work. It was built in 1714 and affects a faintly classical style, being fashioned of narrow bricks and white stone. The Rampe beyond bends upon itself and, skirting a platform surmounted by a sentry tower as yellow as old parchment, comes face to face with the great battery (now bricked up) which stands at the foot of the palace walls. It can be seen how perfectly this gun emplacement commanded not only the Rampe but also the entrance to the harbour. On the east side of the battery is an immense military work in the form of a rounded buttress, very like the fold of a hanging curtain turned to stone. This is the *oreillon* which served to mask the battery from the land side.

Below the battery the Rampe turns again upon itself and so reaches the second gate. It is a gate in white stone, frail and ghostlike, and inscribed with the date 1533. Beyond it was the drawbridge. Here the Rampe bends sharply in its course for the third time and passes through the main gateway by a vaulted passage of great solidity. This was the famous Mirador or post of the guard.

The Rampe now ends in a bald square with the palace on one side and the town on the other. On the



## The Rock of Monaco

remaining sides of the square are only a parapet and the winds of heaven.

There are trees and seats in the square, for it is a place for idleness where old women knit and young women sew, where children play and ancients ruminate. There are cannon in the square pointing towards innocent Cap d'Ail. They were presented to the reigning prince of the time by Louis XIV. They are quite innocuous, but serve to remind the careless that the place is a stronghold and to provide a plaything for small boys who—with the happy imagination of the young—regard these implements of war as horses (or more probably as donkeys), sit astride of them, strike them with whips and urge them to “get up.”

The palace covers the whole of the northern extremity of the rock. It is disappointing in that it fails to realise the emotional past of the place, its dramatic and picturesque history, the dire assaults and bloody frays without its gates, the tragedies within its walls. It has been so mutilated in the past and so improved and modernised in the present that it has become inexpressive. The strong, rigid lines, the grim wrinkles, the determined frown have been so smoothed away that the face has become vacuous. The new clock tower and the rows of modern windows do not recall the stern halberdier who held the place against all odds, nor the bull-necked men in armour who yelled damnation to the Genoese.

The battlements are more suited for the display of flowers than for a line of determined faces under steel caps glaring along the barrels of their muskets. As the official residence of a prince it is becoming and appro-

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pritate, but it is not that palace on a rock that bid defiance to the world for flaming centuries. Monaco has a great and a glorious history, but it is not written on the walls of the palace of to-day.

By the generosity of the prince the palace is thrown open to visitors on certain days but it presents little that is of interest. It has been so ruthlessly treated in days gone by and subjected to such base uses that there is little left to recall the stirring days of the old Grimaldi. In, or about, 1842 the palace was completely restored, so that it assumes now all the characters of a modern structure. It is of little concern to know that the south wing was built in this century or the north wing in that, since the traces of age have been nearly all removed. A full account of the lines of the palace, both old and new, is given in M. Urbain Bosio's excellent treatise "*Le Vieux Monaco*."<sup>1</sup> Between the gate that leads from the Rampe and the gate of the palace itself is a curved wall, with machicolations of an unusual type. This wall (now much restored) is said to date from the fourteenth century and behind it was the hall for the main guard.

The palace is entered by a fine gateway bearing the Grimaldi arms and erected in 1672. It leads into a court which is rather bare and cold. Here is to be found a double staircase of marble which is a little out of keeping with its surroundings. There are frescoes in the arcades which line the court, but they have been recently and rather crudely restored. The little chapel at the north end of this *Cour d'Honneur* is simple and dignified and in a modest way beautiful. It was built in 1656 and restored in 1884. The long range of reception rooms,

<sup>1</sup> Published in Nice, 1907.

## The Rock of Monaco

with their lavish gilt decorations and their florid frescoes, fulfil the average conception of "royal apartments." There are a few pictures of interest but none of especial worth. There is an old renaissance chimney-piece of carved stone which is, however, memorable.

The garden is very fascinating with its deep shade, its solemn paths, its palm trees and its little orange grove. In one corner of the garden are the ruins of an old defence work which surmounts the northern wall and which may claim to be part of the palace in its fighting days.

Behind the chapel is an ancient tower with battlements of a forgotten type upon its summit. It is square and plain and covered with ivy upon one side. It has no windows, but presents a few square openings, about 18 inches in width, which are the *soupiraux* which alone admitted light and air into the interior. This tower is the only substantial part of the original palace that is left and is said to date from 1215. According to M. Bosio<sup>1</sup> it has two stories above the ground floor. On each story is a single room lit and ventilated solely by means of the small, square vents (*soupiraux*) already mentioned. He states that these two rooms were used as prisons and that on the walls are to be seen names cut in both Italian and in Spanish. The Italian would pertain to the time of the wars of the Guelphs and Ghibellines and the Spanish to the period of the Spanish occupation (1549-1641).

On the other side of the square and directly facing the palace is a large official building known, at one time, as the House of the Governor. It has seen many changes.

<sup>1</sup> "Le Vieux Monaco."

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

It was the headquarters of the Revolutionists during the Terror. On the restoration of the Grimaldi it became the seat of the Civil Tribunal and of the schools. It later was occupied as a large hotel and café and finally by the Gambling Rooms pending the completion of a casino at Monte Carlo in 1860.<sup>1</sup> On the west side of the square is the Promenade Ste. Barbe, so called after the chapel of Sainte Barbe which stood here. The chapel has been converted into a dwelling house, but its door still stands and over the portal are still the initials S.B. By no little ingenuity this entry has been converted into a shop for the sale of picture postcards.

The town is pleasant, clean and orderly. It has the aspect of a place of much content. Its few streets are parallel and follow the line of the rock. They are narrow, so narrow, indeed, that the notice at the entrance of the Rue des Briques to the effect that no motors are admitted would seem to be an official jest based upon the more ancient estimate of the camel and the eye of the needle. There are some picturesque houses and fragments of old buildings in the town. In the Rue du Milieu are certain beautifully carved doorways in stone of the seventeenth century or earlier.

The winter visitor is apt to pity the Monégasques for their narrow streets which keep out the life-giving sun. When the mistral blows he has less contempt for the sheltering lane and as the end of May is reached—when the sun is shunned as if it were mustard gas—he bolts across the square, like a man under fire, and diving into the cool, dim ways of Monaco thanks his creator for the blessing of shade.

<sup>1</sup> The present Casino at Monte Carlo was built in 1878.



MONACO : THE SENTRY TOWER ON THE RAMPE.



MONACO : THE DRAWBRIDGE GATE, 1533.



## The Rock of Monaco

The old church of St. Nicolas has been replaced by a new cathedral which was completed in 1897 and professes to be in the Romanesque-Byzantine style. This cathedral is, no doubt, a worthy example of modern art, but the building is so immense, so glaring and so ornate that it is quite out of touch with the humble little dun-coloured town. It is as inappropriate as would be the Albert Memorial if found by the duck-pond of a village green.

The old church was a loss to Monaco much to be deplored. It dated from the twelfth century, was in the form of a Latin cross and contained a number of curious chapels. It was composed largely of stone from the monument at La Turbie. M. Bosio describes it fully in his work and adds that its disappearance is very regrettable from the point of view of art.

Near the cathedral are two admirable museums, little as they may be expected on this war-battered rock. One is devoted to anthropology and the other to oceanography. They were instituted by the present prince whose attainments as a man of science are known the world over.

Immediately opposite to the cathedral is the old Hôtel de Ville or *Maison Commune*. It is a simple building of two stories, the door of which on the upper floor is approached by a double staircase ending in a modest balcony. It was constructed in 1660 and is, in spite of its simplicity, the most charming house in Monaco. The lower floor—M. Bosio states—was used for the storing of corn and meal for the people in times of siege, while the upper and more dignified rooms were the offices of the mayors, *échevins* or consuls.

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

Opposite the side door of the cathedral is the Rue des Carmes. It was so called because it contained a figure of the Madonna of Mount Carmel. “On the eve of the fête of *Notre Dame du Mont-Carmel* the old Monégasques surrounded this hallowed figure with flowers and lighted candles and sang hymns before it.”<sup>1</sup> The place of this figure is indicated by a painting of the Madonna of Mount Carmel on a wall of one of the houses.

The Rue des Briques is worth following to the end. It leads to the Mairie—a modern building of no interest—but just beyond the Mairie, on the right side of the road, is a humble-looking old house with a wide, round-arched doorway and square windows fitted with grilles. This was the Mint where money was struck when the Principality of Monaco had its own coinage. The use of the Mint appears to have been abandoned about 1840, although the currency of Monaco was not abolished until some years after.

A little farther down the street, and still on the right hand side of the way, is a long wall. This shuts in the famous Giardinetto or Little Garden. It belonged to a house built by Charlotte de Grammont, wife of Prince Louis I, who left the Court of France and retired to Monaco in order to be near her daughter, who had taken the veil in the convent adjoining. This convent—the Convent of the Visitation—is a large, yellow, barrack-like building which occupies one side of the Place de la Visitation, having on the other side the Hôtel du Gouvernement. The convent was founded by Charlotte de Grammont in the middle of the seventeenth century and here her heart is buried. On the chapel—which is singularly plain—

<sup>1</sup> Bosio. “Le Vieux Monaco.”



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is an inscription to note that it was built in 1663 and restored in 1870.

The south-eastern extremity of the rock is occupied by the gardens of St. Martin, which were designed by Prince Honoré V in 1816 to give employment to the people during a year of dearth. These gardens are most enchanting. They occupy the edge of the cliff and even climb some little way down the side of the cliff by hesitating paths. They are represented by a maze of shady walks with, here and there, a terrace overhanging the sea or a sheltered look-out on a point of rock. It is a wild garden partly tamed, a wilderness where every path is made smooth. Its vegetation is partly Italian, partly African. Here are pine trees, olives and palms, with prickly pear, aloes and agave, pepper trees and mimosa, eucalyptus and the mastic bush, jasmine and myrtle, hedges of choisya, banks of rosemary, beds of violets and cascades of scarlet geranium. Below at the foot of the glowing cliff is the cool purple of the sea with a fringe of white foam to show where the rock and the waters meet.

Just beyond the Oceanographic Museum is a wide, paved platform on the brink of the cliff with parapet and sentry house. Beneath it is the Great Casemate built about 1709 to provide shelter for the people during bombardment and to accommodate a cistern for the storing of water when the outer world was cut off. This great underground "dug-out" is now used as a prison.

At the end of the garden is the rugged old fort built by Prince Antoine over 200 years ago. It is looking towards the casino of Monte Carlo, just as a toothless, old brigand might look at a dancing girl. It is a romantic

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

spot with its winding stairs, its great gun embrasures, its mysterious doorways and its deserted sentry walk. It no longer bristles with armed men; it no longer thunders, with flashes of flame, across the sea; it no longer awakens an echo that shakes the astonished hills; for it is now a kind of "Celia's Arbour," a place of whispers where lovers meet and ruffle the silence with nothing more unquiet than a sigh.

## XX

### A FATEFUL CHRISTMAS EVE

**N**OT many years after the building of the citadel or fort in 1215 (page 145) Monaco became involved in the war between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines. The Guelphs were represented by the Grimaldi, the Ghibellines by the Spinola. Each party twice besieged the other, when entrenched within the citadel, and each was twice supplanted by its opponents. Indeed such were the changes that a ship returning to Monaco after a voyage of no more than a month or so did well to inquire, before entering the harbour, whether the rock was in the hands of the Grimaldi or the Spinola.

In 1306 the Ghibellines, or Genoese, held Monaco and felt sure of their holding, for they had long remained undisturbed. They were represented by the head of the Spinola family who had taken up his residence in the citadel or, as it would by this time be termed, the palace.

On Christmas Eve 1306 a small party of men left Nice after sundown and made their way to Monaco by way of certain paths across the hills. It was not a conspicuous party, being formed only of a few armed men and a monk. They would be taken for a body of retainers moving from one castle to another. It might have been observed that they treated the monk with great respect and deference. He himself was not notable, except that

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he was an agile and powerful man and that he seemed rather more hilarious than is becoming to a priest.

When they reached Monaco the night was at its darkest, the harbour deserted and the rock merely a towering black mass. They then did a curious thing. Without a word they parted. The armed men crept along the foot of the cliff and were at once lost to sight. The monk, left alone, sat down by the water's edge and listened. He was listening for the sound of a church bell. It would be the bell of St. Nicolas in Monaco rung to announce the midnight Mass. As he waited he drew something from the folds of his gown. It was not a rosary nor a crucifix. It was a dagger with a long blade which he fingered affectionately.

When the first sound of the bell rang over the sea he rose and commenced to ascend the steep path which led to the gate of the town. He walked with his head bowed and with leisurely steps. His habit was that of the Priory of St. Dévote, the little church which looked across the harbour. Any who went by passed him unnoticed. If he stumbled on the path in the dark he swore which is unusual among men of his cloth. Before the gate was the sentinel, who recognising the garb of the priest, merely inclined his head with a gesture of respect. The monk responded by commending him to God. Before long this guardian of the gate had need of that commendation. The monk, apparently deep in thought, passed through the courtyard occupied by the guard. They were sitting around a small fire on the ground and were playing at *minchiate* or *tresetti* or some such game of cards.

He walked on unchallenged and entered the great square before the palace. He drew a sigh of relief. It



MONACO: THE PALACE.



## A Fateful Christmas Eve

might have implied relief at having reached the top of a steep hill. It might have implied more. He turned to the left and, walking with the solemn step, appropriate to a priest going to Mass, entered one of the narrow streets of the town that led to the church. There were lights in some upper windows and people were leaving their houses to attend the evening service. When he came upon the last cross street he turned down it. It led not to the church but to the ramparts.

On reaching the ramparts his manner suddenly changed; he became intensely alert. He leaned eagerly over the wall and whistled. A response came out of the black shadows into which he gazed. His friends from Nice had kept their tryst. How these armed men got over the wall into the town is not known. Very possibly the monk had a rope concealed under his habit.

In a few moments all his followers were around him. The bell of the church had ceased to toll and the celebration of the Mass had begun. There was now no need for further disguise. The party rushed back through the very street that the monk had traversed. They may have passed a belated worshipper on his way to St. Nicolas who, as they tore by, would fall back against the wall. They pressed on, headed by the monk, who had now a sword in one hand and a dagger in the other.

On gaining the square a few of the party turned to the main gate. The soldiers of the guard were still busy at their game of cards and were butchered as they sat. The assault was so sudden that the man with the winning "hand" fell back dead, with the cards still in his grip, spread out from his thumb fan-like, but so spattered with blood that they looked all red. The sentinel, who had

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

been commended to God, was stabbed in the back as he stood and so passed out of the world without knowing how he had come to leave it.

The monk and the rest of the company made for the palace. The men at the open door, who were drowsily awaiting the return of the Spinola from St. Nicolas, were cut down as if by a blast of deadly wind and so the citadel was won. Those within had no time to arm. They were killed or made prisoners according to the attitude they assumed.

In the great hall lolled the Master of the House who, dozing in a chair, was thunderstruck to see a body of violent men, headed by a monk, dash in through the door. Jumping up he could only call out to the advancing priest, "In the name of Heaven who are you?" and tremble as the answer came, "I am Francis Grimaldi."

The Spinola who were in the church at the time of the attack managed to reach the harbour and escaped in their galleys to Genoa.<sup>1</sup> It was thus that the great family of Grimaldi obtained a final hold upon Monaco and it was by reason of what happened on this Christmas Eve that the figure of a monk with a sword appears upon their coat of arms.

From this period, with the exception of an interval of eleven years, 1327-1338,<sup>2</sup> Monaco has remained in the hands of the Grimaldi who can thus claim to have been masters of the stout little territory for no less than six hundred years.

Francis Grimaldi—often spoken of as Francis the Crafty—was killed in a fight in 1309.

<sup>1</sup> "Monaco et ses Princes," by H. Métivier, 1862, Vol. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Between these dates the Spinola were again in possession of the rock.



## XXI

### CHARLES THE SEAMAN

**I**T is needless, and indeed impossible within the limits of this book, to follow the history of the long line of adventurous men who were in turn Lords of Monaco. They lived through years of trouble and unrest with varying fortune. They fought and schemed with varying success. They mounted high and circled far. They came near to be dragged in the dust and yet through all vicissitudes, through storm and calm, they kept the red and white flag of the Grimaldi afloat over the tower of Monaco.

One of the most brilliant holders of the *seigneurie* of Monaco was Carlo I, otherwise known as Charles the Seaman. He was a restless and violent man, as wild as a hawk, with an ambition as boundless as his daring and with an ability of mind which raised him to the position of a great power on the seas.

He began by choosing a wife from the family of his direst enemy; for he married Lucinetta Spinola. The marriage, so far as the records tell, was fortunate and Lucinetta bore him six children.

The great purpose of his life was to make Monaco a naval power and in this aim he succeeded, for by his indomitable energy he raised the Monégasque fleet to a position of high rank not only in the Mediterranean but

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

in the remoter waters of Europe. Although the harbour at his command was small he was able, on one occasion, to collect a fleet of no fewer than thirty galleys and a force of ten thousand men-at-arms.

He devoted his fleet, in the first instance, to advance the prestige of Monaco, to consolidate his territory and to expand his commerce. When these needs were satisfied he went further afield. He was a free lance and was prepared to offer his services to any prince who was in need of help and was prepared to pay liberally for his assistance. Indeed when any war, large or small, was impending it was desirable, as a preliminary, to secure the strong arm of Charles the Seaman. He was indifferent as to the merits of the quarrel or as to the side on which he served so long as he saw his way to make a good thing out of it.

He began his fighting career in a quite modest fashion in the year 1331. The Catalans, being unfortunately not aware of the character of the Lord of Monaco, had the audacity to make a blundering attack upon that citadel. Carlo fell upon them, scattered them, drove them back panic-stricken and, dashing after them, sacked their town of Barcelona as a warning not to meddle with the Grimaldi again.

Having a fine fleet and a period of leisure he now turned his forces against his old enemies, the Genoese, harried them without mercy and blockaded their city. He was doing well and likely to do better when war broke out between France and England, between Philip of Valois on one side and Edward III on the other. Philip at once sent to Monaco to beg the help—on terms—of Carlo against the English. The invitation was too attrac-

## Charles the Seaman

tive to be ignored; so the fleet of Monaco turned westward and set sail for the remote and almost unknown island of England. It was a venture of no little peril. The Gulf of Lyons and the Bay of Biscay are not to the liking of seamen even at the present day, and to cross these wastes of water in mere galleys was a venture that needed a stout heart—such a heart as that of Carlo Grimaldi.

The Monégasque fleet, having joined with that of France, came up with the English off the Channel Islands. A sea battle followed in which Carlo and the French, aided very opportunely by a storm, defeated the naval forces of England. This was in the year 1343. Charles the Seaman gained from this expedition not only glory but profit; for he received from Philip a very substantial recompense in money as well as certain rights to trade in the Mediterranean which brought considerable additions to his treasury.

Having disposed of the English navy Grimaldi's services were no longer needed by the French; so he returned to Monaco to resume his interrupted fight with the Genoese. Fighting with the Genoese had become a habit with the Lords of Monaco, an abiding passion, a kind of disorder which would be described as chronic. Carlo was getting on extremely well, was doing great damage to Genoa and inflicting still more gratifying injury upon her fleet, when once more the King of France called for his aid and this time gave the order—as a contractor would express it—for an expeditionary force.

This force was to be employed in France in fighting the English. It appears to have been a joint force of

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

Genoese and Monégasque under the combined command of Carlo Grimaldi and a Doria of Genoa.

The force arrived on the scene of action too late. Edward III of England had already ravaged the coast of France and had advanced to within a few miles of Paris. The battle of Crécy followed. The Genoese—as every schoolboy will remember—wearied by forced marches, were sent to the front by the French king. There had been a storm of rain and, having no cases for their bows, the catgut that strung them was rendered soft and useless. The men—thus hampered—were unable to withstand the English archers and began to retreat. The king, seeing them waver, ordered his own troops to set upon them. “Or tôt,” cried he, “tuez toute cette ribandaille, car ils nous empêchant la voie sans raison.” A general rout followed and the victory of the English was complete. The battle was fought on August 26th, 1346. Both Doria and Grimaldi were wounded, but whether by the English archers or the French pikemen, is unknown. In spite of his wounds Carlo hastened to Calais which was hard pressed by the English. His efforts, however, availed nothing and Calais fell. Carlo Grimaldi, having completed his engagement, returned to Monaco.

Neither he nor his navy could be long idle. There was always lucrative work for them somewhere, together with substantial pay and good prospects of loot. Thus we find him fighting Greeks and Venetians, going to the assistance of Don Jayme II of Majorca in his war with Pierre IV of Aragon, and, later on, fighting on the side of this same Pierre of Aragon against the Moors of Gibraltar. This last-named expedition was in 1349.



MONACO : THE OLD HÔTEL DE VILLE.



## Charles the Seaman

Before that date, viz. in 1346, he had made peace with Genoa and, as a compliment, the command of the Genoese fleet was given to his brother.

Wars were very profitable and Carlo was becoming a rich man. He had extended the frontiers of Monaco; for he had acquired by purchase the *seigneuries* of Mentone, Roquebrune, Castillon and Eze. He had rich fiefs in France as well as the towns of Cagnes and Villeneuve in the vicinity of Nice and was, moreover, engaged in a lucrative commerce along the coast.

All was well, but unfortunately the old chronic malady—the passion to fight Genoa—broke out again as chronic maladies are apt to do. This time the veteran seaman was not so fortunate and indeed fortune would seem to have deserted him. The Duke of Genoa fell upon Monaco; surrounded it; blockaded it and compelled the tough old fighter, who had never owned defeat, to haul down his flag and surrender. There was never a more pathetic moment in the history of Monaco than when the gallant seaman walked down the path from his palace to the sea a beaten man and, most bitter of all, beaten by Genoa. This was in 1356.

Carlo Grimaldi retired upon Mentone to collect forces with which to fight the Genoese once more and so gain possession of his beloved rock. For him the time never came. The ranks of armed men that he dreamed about night and day were never mustered and in 1363 the great and heroic seaman died.

## XXII

### THE LUCIEN MURDER

**I**N 1457 a little girl, aged twelve, became, on the death of her father, the ruling princess of Monaco. Her name was Claudine. The position of this little maid was embarrassing and indeed pitiable. She would like to have romped in the playroom or have spent the days in the garden with her pets and her girl friends. Instead of that she had to sit for hours on a throne with her hair done up in an unwonted and uncomfortable manner, with robes about her which were much too large and with her feet dangling a long way off the floor. Here she had to receive the obeisance of venerable court officials and of burly fighting men who bowed gravely as they approached and then knelt before those ridiculous small feet of hers of which she was so conscious.

It was very amusing to play the queen in the garden with her friends and with a tree trunk for a throne and a wisp of paper for a crown; but this solemn ceremony, carried on without a smile, was merely a thing of dread. She had always been "Claudine" or "Claudinetta" to her companions when they played with her, chased her about and pinched her; but now they bent their heads when she stepped on the lawn and called her "Madam" and "Your Highness." She had to learn that her youth had vanished at the age of twelve and one can imagine



## The Lucien Murder

her, when a function was over, throwing off her robes and rushing to the arms of her old nurse to cry until her tears were spent.

She had a worse trouble to face than to be dressed up like a puppet and stared at. She was rich. She had what she was told were "prospects," with the result that she became infested by a crowd of people of whom she had never dreamed—a crowd of would-be lovers and suitors for her hand. They pestered her with languishing letters and with sickly sonnets. They were all anxious to die for her. They sent her presents. They remembered her birthday. They followed her to Mass. They played lutes under her window and awoke her in the morning by singing unseasonable ballads. She had to listen to insidious lords and ladies who gurgled in her ear the praises of their sons, their grandsons and their nephews. Before she was fourteen she must have been as sick of the name "husband" as a tired man would be of the yelping of a locked-out dog or the whine of a persistent hawker.

The more impetuous of her suitors seem to have proceeded to actual excess in their efforts; for the faithful historian states that "they endeavoured to secure her person by ruse or force."<sup>1</sup> It may be trying to be adored by one irrepressible young man, but to receive declarations of love and offers of marriage from a hustling mob must have been alarming. A love-sick man, as an individual, may be simply depressing, but a crowd of love-sick men reproduces the nauseous features of an out-patient room at a hospital.

In the end Claudine married her cousin, Lambert

<sup>1</sup> "Monaco et ses Princes," by H. Métivier, 1862.

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Grimaldi the son of Nicolas, the Lord of Antibes, on the excellent grounds that both her father and her grandfather had named this gentleman as a suitable husband in their last wills and testaments.

Claudine and Lambert had children and among them two sons, Jean and Lucien. Jean succeeded his mother as the ruling prince, but was unfortunately murdered by his younger brother Lucien. This was a regrettable episode in Lucien's life; but he did something to repair it. In 1506 Monaco was once more besieged by the Genoese. It was a great and desperate assault, but Lucien defended the rock with such consummate skill that the attack failed. The siege was memorable since it represented the last occasion on which this much tried citadel was beleaguered and it exalted Lucien to the position of a great military leader.

Now Lucien had a nephew, Bartolomeo Doria by name, to whom he was much attached and to whom he had shown great kindness. On a certain day in August 1524 Bartolomeo was about to proceed from Ventimiglia to Lyons. Lucien, wishing to do his nephew honour, placed a fine ship at his disposal and begged him to stay at Monaco on his way westwards. Doria accepted both the ship and the invitation with effusion for it occurred to him that it afforded an excellent opportunity to murder his genial old uncle.

In due course Bartolomeo landed at Monaco where he was given a hearty welcome and was received by the prince with demonstrations of affection. He was attended by an exceptionally large suite and this the indulgent uncle ascribed to the natural swagger of youth. On reaching the palace Lucien begged young Doria to



MONACO: THE CLIFF GARDEN.



## The Lucien Murder

accompany him to Mass. He declined; so the prince went alone. During Lucien's absence at the church it was noticed that Bartolomeo was engaged for long in a whispered conference with those who had accompanied him.

As soon as the heat of the day was over (it may be about six o'clock) the party met at supper. Bartolomeo, who sat next to his uncle, was very silent during the meal and—as it was remembered afterwards—was much preoccupied and unnaturally pale. Lucien tried to rally him; made jokes; dug him in the ribs; chaffed him and suggested that he was in love or had lost heavily at cards. Bartolomeo could only reply with a faint mechanical smile and a hollow effort to be jovial.

A moment came when a dignified chamberlain stood up and, with his goblet raised, proposed "Health and long life to the Prince." As Bartolomeo responded to this toast it was observed that he became as livid as a dead man and that the cup chattered against his teeth. It was with a throttled gasp that he muttered the words "Long life to the Prince." Lucien acknowledged this kindly expression with a grateful smile and pressed his own warm hand on that of his nephew.

Now hanging about his father's chair was Lucien's little boy. Bartolomeo had often played with the child and was curiously attached to him. Lucien, knowing the affection with which he regarded the lad, took him up and placed him in Doria's arms. The boy was delighted and began to prattle of the doings of his little world and spoke, with breathless rapture, of to-morrow when his father was going to take him, as a great treat,

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to the shady beach at Cap d'Ail where they would build a hut, light a fire and cook their own meal.

This talk was more than Bartolomeo could endure; for he knew that to-morrow the boy would be fatherless and sobbing his heart out in a darkened room. Bartolomeo, as he held the chattering little fellow in his arms, shook to such an extent that even the child's talk was stilled and he began—moved by some subtle instinct—to be frightened. His father lifted him from Doria's lap and told him to run away. Lucien could not understand his nephew this evening and ascribed his tremor to a touch of ague.

After supper Lucien invited Bartolomeo to come into his private room. As they walked along the corridor, with Lucien's hand upon his nephew's shoulder, Doria—looking through the window—saw four galleys approaching. He pointed them out to his uncle as the convoy of his cousin Andrea and begged the prince to convey an important message to him and to do his cousin the honour of sending an escort with it. Lucien was only too pleased to gratify his guest and at once ordered some fourteen men of his own bodyguard to welcome the on-coming fleet. In this way Bartolomeo rid the palace of fourteen formidable armed men, of nearly all, in fact, who were on duty that night. Andrea—it may be explained—was aware of the purpose of Bartolomeo's visit to Monaco and was coming to his assistance.

Lucien and his nephew passed along the corridor, entered the prince's room and closed the door after them. Outside the door was stationed, according to the routine of the palace, a page, a faithful negro, who was devoted to his master. Hardly had the door closed than the

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page heard the prince scream out "Ah! you traitor!" He burst into the room to find his master felled to the ground and Bartolomeo bending over him, stabbing him with a dagger.

He rushed back along the corridor to give the alarm; but the bodyguard were already on their way to the harbour and when the page, with the few men he could muster, returned to the prince's room they found it already filled with Doria's friends armed to the teeth, and the prince dead.

The alarm soon spread to the town. From every door in the narrow streets men poured forth and, armed with whatever weapon they could pick up, rushed in a furious body to the palace. Bartolomeo—who had hoped to seize the citadel—soon saw that his case was hopeless and his party outnumbered. He and his friends escaped by a back stair, made their way to the harbour and gained Andrea's galleys which were now nearing the beach. In this way Bartolomeo fled safely to France, leaving the little town buzzing with disorder like a ravaged beehive and, in a silent room, a sobbing boy lying prostrate on the body of his dead father.

## XXIII

### HOW THE SPANIARDS WERE GOT RID OF

**F**OR a number of years Monaco, with that part of the Riviera which is adjacent thereto, was under the protection of Spain. It is said that the protectorate was sought and contrived by Hercules, Prince of Monaco. How this mastery of a foreign power arose is not so much a matter of interest as how it was got rid of.

Hercules, by the way, came himself to a tragic end. He was, in the language of the history books, an "unprincipled libertine." He outraged the wives and daughters of certain of his subjects. The indignant husbands and fathers had no means of redress. There was no authority to appeal to above the prince; so they took the matter into their own good hands. One night a grim and determined body of men turned out into the streets, forced their way into the palace and into the prince's bedchamber. They dragged him from his bed, cut his throat and threw his dead body over the cliff into the sea. This prompt and primitive act of justice took place in the year 1604.

Honorius the First, who succeeded to the prince just named, found the protectorate an insufferable burden and resented the presence of a Spanish garrison within the walls of Monaco. He endured the insolence, the



## How the Spaniards were Got Rid of

exactions and the oppression of the foreigners for about forty years when it came upon him that he could tolerate the sight of them no longer. The Spaniards were lounging in his courtyard and his barrack square and strutting about his battlements to protect him from the supposed insidious enemy, France. He did not wish to be protected from France. He desired protection from the swaggering upstarts from Spain who patronised him, patted him metaphorically on the back and told him that he need not be afraid for they would look after him. Honorius preferred the possible hostility of France to the ever-present and offensive guardianship of the Spaniards.

He was tired of being looked after; so one day he got into touch with his enemy, the French, and had a genial, open-hearted talk with the general. The general frankly confessed that this Spanish garrison on the frontier was a menace and a hateful thing that grew, year by year, more disgusting. No doubt in the course of the interview they "said things" about these poltroons, these blusterers, these sneering braggarts and vied with one another merrily in the invention of crushing and ingenious terms of abuse. As a result of a pleasant chat they entered into a secret compact, the conditions of which were simple. Honorius was prepared to place Monaco under the French flag if only the French would rid him of this abominable old man of the sea, the Spaniard.

The day was near at hand when the Spanish garrison would be removed to Nice in order to be relieved by a fresh contingent. A very few of the obnoxious foreigners would then be left in Monaco. This was the

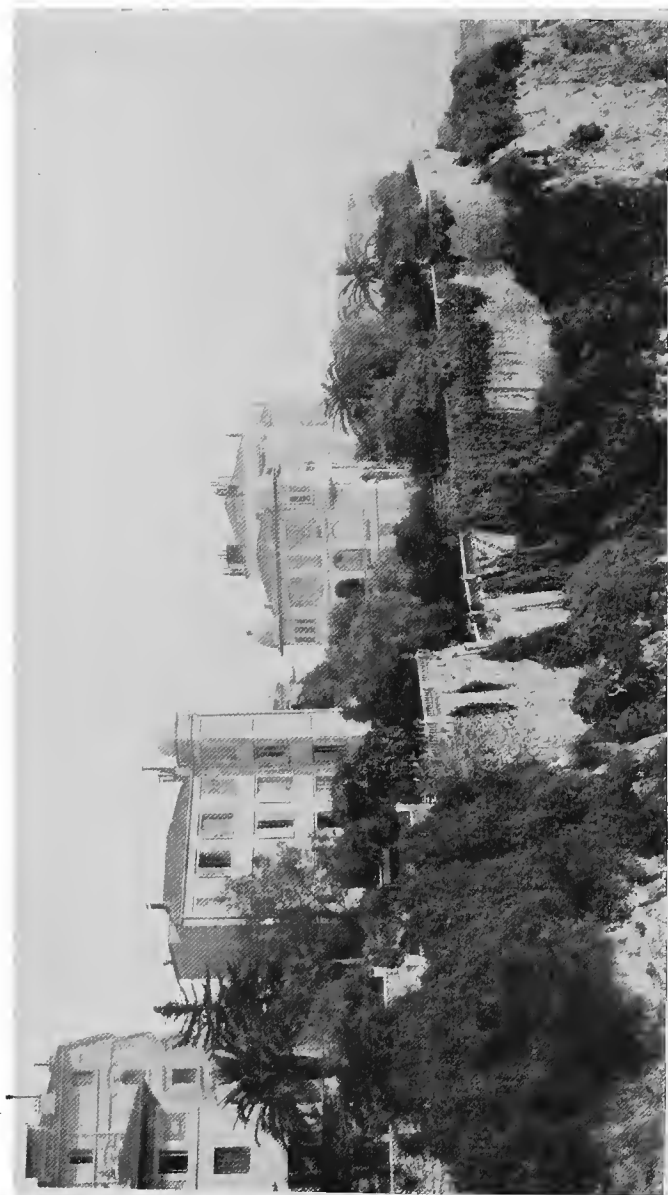
## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

day, therefore, arranged for the happy release. It was a certain day in November 1641.

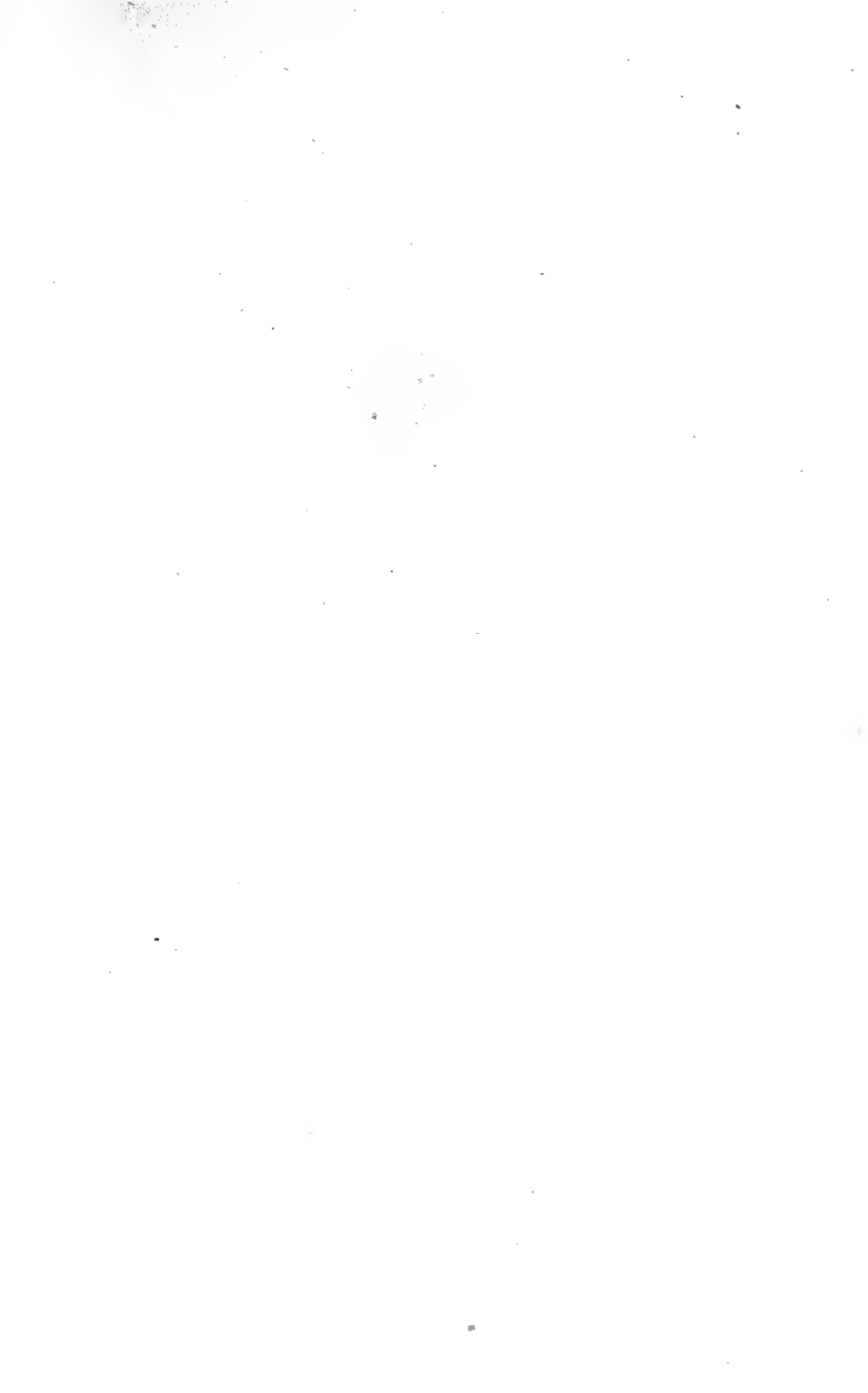
Before the time arrived Honorius introduced into Monaco some hundred trusty men from Mentone. They came to the rock under all sorts of pretexts. Some were to visit friends who did not exist; others were coming to repair fortifications that needed no amendment, and a strangely large body were called upon to help in the palace kitchen which was already overstaffed. Anyhow they came; and, at the same time, it was arranged that two hundred armed Mentonais were to find hiding-places outside the walls, on the cliff side or in the huts about the Condamine and the harbours; while a few, no doubt, would seek shelter among the olive groves where Monte Carlo and its casino now stand.

The main body of the Spanish garrison marched off to Nice, singing and shouting, for they were on the way to their homes in Spain. The disposal of the few who remained was left to the ingenuity of a priest, a man of resource, one Pacchiero by name. He organised a special night service in the church "to pray for the defeat of the French should they attack Monaco." The Spaniards could do no less than join in this pious exercise. The little church was soon filled with men, kneeling row upon row and pouring forth petitions for the destruction of the ill-intentioned French.

At 11 P.M. while the service was in progress, the glare of a bonfire, on the point of the rock, shot suddenly over the sea. It was a good bonfire for the light of its flames could be seen from Cap d'Ail to Cap Martin. It was a signal to the French that "The Day" had come and not only the day but the hour. The French captain,



THE GORGE BETWEEN MONACO AND MONTE CARLO.



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the Comte d'Alais, with a fine body of men under his command was looking out eagerly for this flash of fire and the moment he saw it he set off with his company to Monaco.

At the same time the Monégasques and the five-score absent-minded visitors from Mentone fell upon the Spaniards; threw open the gate and admitted the two hundred who had been shivering outside in the cold. After a sharp fight the scanty garrison was overcome and were lodged in a dungeon where they could continue their prayers for the ruin of the French at greater leisure.

Next morning the French troops marched into Monaco with banners flying and bands playing. They were welcomed by the people with songs and cheers and noisy enthusiasm. The houses were hung with garlands of flowers and all the women were decked out in their best. The cheering must have penetrated to the dungeons and have been very bitter to the Spaniards who had spent so much time in praying for the overthrow of these very men whose swinging tramp they could hear overhead.

The prince behaved with much graciousness and generosity. He caused the French troops and the Spaniards to be paraded in the square and, when the crowd had been hushed to silence, he delivered an appropriate and, no doubt, impressive address. At its conclusion he took from his neck the order of the Golden Fleece and handed it to the Spanish captain with the request that he would return it to His Majesty of Spain with the late wearer's compliments and thanks. He then, amid uproarious cheering, donned the white

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scarf which betokened his allegiance to the King of France. The Spaniards he treated with a fine liberality, inspired by the grateful knowledge that he would never see them again. He allowed the officers to retain their swords. He gave to all the soldiers double pay and a generous supply of food for their journey. Furthermore he presented to the captain a letter in which—with some excess of fancy—he dwelt upon the bravery which both officers and men had shown under the recent disturbing conditions.

Thus it was that the Spaniards left Monaco and that the people of the rock saw the last of them. As they marched down the cliff to the high road they were not only content but even disposed to be thankful. Some, no doubt, were a little sad because they were leaving their sweethearts behind in Monaco; while all—without question—were burning to wring the neck of the priest who had organised that special night service at which they had prayed for the undoing of their now jubilant enemies.

Louis XIII of France was much pleased with the part the Prince of Monaco had played in ridding him of a Spanish outpost so near to his own territories. "He arranged by the treaty of Péronne for the independence of Monaco and the protection of a French garrison, together with sufficient lands in France to compensate for the loss of any Italian revenues confiscated by Spain. Grimaldi was rewarded by lands in France which were called his Duchy of Valentinois."<sup>1</sup>

It was in this manner that the princes of Monaco became possessed of the title of Dukes of Valentinois.

<sup>1</sup> "Old Provence," by T. A. Cook, Vol. ii., p. 158, 1914.

## XXIV

### A MATTER OF ETIQUETTE

**A**MONG the minor happenings in the ways of the world a disproportionate interest always attaches to the breaking off of a marriage engagement. The event excites surprise and florid speculation, together with a tender and unreasoning sense of regret. It is, to the unknowing, as the sudden slamming of a door that seemed to open into paradise. The rupture may be due to many things, to ill-health or ill-temper, to discoveries, to a change of heart, to mean matters affecting money or to the lure of a brighter flame. It must be rare that the happiness of a devoted couple, on the very eve of their wedding, is dangerously threatened by a mere matter of etiquette; yet this happened at Monaco—or more precisely in Monaco harbour—about the year 1751.

The reigning prince, Honorius III, became enamoured of the beautiful Maria Caterina Brignole. This lady had not only a pretty face, but also a great charm of character and of mind. The two became engaged. The intricate arrangements that attend a princely espousal were completed and the date of the wedding was agreed upon.

The day at last came when the bride would arrive at Monaco. It was a day of feverish excitement. Every

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flag that the principality could produce was fluttering in the breeze; the country around was stripped of its flowers to deck the town; while every wardrobe was ransacked to furnish the very gayest head-dress, tunic and gown that the owner could boast of. All the inhabitants of Monaco—men, women and children—poured down to the harbour, leaving the streets deserted and the houses empty of all but the crippled or the sick. The quay was crammed; the beach was lined to the water's edge, while even on the crest of La Turbie was a cluster of folk, who, if they could not come down to Monaco, were at least determined to see what little they could.

By the harbour-side was the prince in his most princely dress, surrounded by the gentlemen of the Court, bedecked with every medal, ribbon and star that they possessed. Behind the Court officials was the bodyguard, ranged in a line and as stiff as a row of gaudily painted tin soldiers. On one side of the princely party were the musicians and on the other that bevy of maidens dressed in white which should always attend the coming of a bride.

The long expected ship swept into the harbour; came alongside the quay in breathless silence and was made fast to the landing place. The bodyguard stiffened to even more metallic rigidity; the crowd stood with open mouths ready to cheer, while the musicians placed the trumpets to their lips prepared to burst forth with the National Hymn they had practised upon for so many weeks.

Nothing appropriate to the occasion happened. The silence remained unbroken. The prince had sent an



## A Matter of Etiquette

ambassador to conduct the bride to the shores of Monaco. This over-dressed and over-heated official tumbled ashore in some disorder and hurried to the presence of the motionless prince. He had evidently something to say and indeed something startling to say; for his speech led to a conversation that became more and more excited until it rose to a veritable babel of voices. He hurried back to the ship and there became involved in an equally flurried conversation in which the Marchesa di Brignole, the mother of the bride, took a prominent and decided part. He returned to the quay and set ablaze another heated conflagration of words. Before it was quenched he leapt back to the vessel and there induced, among the expectant company, a second outburst of excited speech, attended by much gesticulation. Whatever he was doing he was at least a man who encouraged conversation.

Still nothing effective took place. The prince had not moved; the bride had not appeared; the band was still silent; the bodyguard still stiff and the crowd still agape. Something evidently had gone wrong and indeed very wrong.

The position—as the multitude came ultimately to learn—was this. The question had arisen as to which of the august two, the bride or the bridegroom, should make the first step towards a meeting. In the case of ordinary human beings the man would, no doubt, have at once rushed to the ship to embrace the lady; while the lady would have hurried to the quay side to find herself in the arms of her lover. Possibly as a result the two might have fallen into the water, but, at least, the meeting would have had a proper emotional interest.

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

Now when princes and the brides of princes are concerned things are quite different. They cannot tumble about like common folk. The prince was advised that he must not advance to the ship, because such a step would be unbecoming and indeed humiliating. He was the Prince of Monaco with his feet upon his own territory and whoever came must advance to him and not he to them. It was unthinkable that he should welcome a visitor to his domain by jumping over the sides of ships. If he moved, his honour, his dignity, his princely position would be at stake.

On the other hand the mother of the lady, a little red in the face, insisted that it was the duty of the bridegroom to meet the bride. It was against decorum for the bride to spring ashore as if she were a long lost child. To show anxiety to meet her future husband was unmaidenly, indelicate and indeed almost indecent.

The prince—as advised—could not give in and the marchesa, with head erect and folded arms and a disposition to stamp on the deck, declined to modify her views as a mother and a woman. So determined was this virtuous peeress upon the point that sooner than let her innocent daughter take one immodest step towards the shore she would break off the engagement and regard the wedding contract as annulled. Indeed in her indignation she went further. She ordered the captain of the ship to cast off and set sail for the port whence she had come.

Now was the opportunity for the mediator, for the common-sense man with no nonsense about him, for the person with a fertile brain. Some genius among the



THE CHAPEL OF ST. DÉVOTE.



## A Matter of Etiquette

disputing parties suggested a compromise and a plank. The scheme was as follows. A broad plank was to be brought and sloped between the vessel and the quay. The prince was to take a certain number of steps along the plank towards the ship and, at the same moment, the bride would take precisely the same number of steps towards the shore. By this means the two would meet, face to face, exactly in the centre of the plank; the bridegroom would then turn on his heels and he and the lady would proceed to the shore side by side.

This ingenious manoeuvre was agreed upon. Its execution was watched with gasping interest, for the happiness of two fond hearts depended upon its correct execution. If the prince took one more step than the lady he would be humiliated for ever; whereas if the bride ventured an extra pace she could never hide her blushes while she lived. The crowd was thrilled; the courtiers trembling and the two chief performers as nervous as if they had to walk on a tight-rope.

It ended well. The man and the maid met in the exact centre of the plank and, keeping step, marched to the shore with the precision of two German soldiers on parade. So admirable was the performance that the heavy military boot of the prince and the little satin shoe of the lady touched the soil of Monaco at the same moment.

The crowd shrieked till they were hoarse; the courtiers bowed to the earth; the guard became so stiff that they nearly fell backwards, while the band let loose that National Hymn which had been pent up so long.

And so—as the story books say—they married and lived happily ever after.

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

It only remains to add one other particular. In the fullness of time the prince died and the princess married again. She married Louis Joseph, Prince of Condé. He had been devoted to her for thirty years and, in spite of her age, still regarded her as the most beautiful creature in the world.

They were married in London and under circumstances which rendered the use of a plank unnecessary.

## XXV

### THE MONTE CARLO OF THE NOVELIST

**M**ONTE CARLO, they told me, was a place of great wickedness, where every path—though lined with flowers—led headlong to the Pit. From the many romances which deal with Monte Carlo I gathered that it was the seat of an intensive culture in iniquity, that it specialised in subtle forms of evil doing and that in its pleasantries vice blossomed as the rose. Among what writers always term “the motley crowd” in this fictitious borough were men of quite exceptional depravity, women more accomplished than Delilah and crafty foreigners of the yellow-skinned and black-haired variety who are far too foreign to be real. Suicide, I understood, prevailed as an endemic disease.

I arrived at the principality on Christmas Eve and, owing to some train derangement, at an hour a little short of midnight. I approached this place—which those who are careless of terms describe as “a Hell”—with anxious interest. When the train came to a standstill I found myself in a quiet, ill-lit station, precisely like fifty other stations on the line. I resented this. I resented even the fact that the magic name “Monte Carlo” was portrayed in quite homely and decorous letters. I expected to see a number of peculiarly evil men alight from the train; but they were not in evidence.

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

They probably "slipped away in the gloom," as they do in the books. The only passengers I noticed were a very weary old lady and her maid. The lady was respectable almost to extinction and was absorbed by concern for her many hand bags and her obtuse dog.

I had been led to think that at midnight the grosser revels of Monte Carlo would be at their height; so in the drive to the hotel I expected to be shocked and grieved. I found myself, on the contrary, passing through pleasant streets as silent as those that encircle a cathedral close. The streets, moreover, were practically empty and for the morality and integrity of the few who passed by I was prepared to vouch even in the dark.

I thought I might see through some open window a room glaring with light and reeking with the ill odours, the ribald sounds and the drunken antics of a supper table. Possibly, through another window, I should behold wild-haired men and shamelessly dressed women bending over a green cloth speckled with cards. I saw only sleeping villas and drowsy gardens that breathed nothing but content and peace. With the romances working in my mind it would have been hardly a matter of surprise had I come upon a man in dress clothes, lying on his back in the pathway, with a wet crimson patch spreading over the front of his white shirt. Happily I saw no such thing. Monte Carlo, so far, had failed; failed in that it was not the place I had been led to expect by the writers of fiction.

Next morning, before the sun rose, I stepped out of my bedroom window on to the balcony to take a first look at the amazing city. It was now Christmas Day and still very dark. From the height at which I stood I



## The Monte Carlo of the Novelist

appeared to be looking into a limitless vault with above a dome of the deepest blue, dotted with stars, and below a floor flooded by a sea whose surface was as ruffled metal.

The only light came from a gap in the east, at the uttermost limit of the vast water. It was a rare and tender light that seemed to be reflected up from the depths. A level band of orange stretched along the sea and over it was a wash of cowslip yellow that, fading into the half-suggested green of an opening leaf, was lost higher still in a flood of blue. Against this ineffable glow stood up, in a black, hard silhouette, the tops of houses.

It was evident that on the slope below me was a town and, at the foot of the town, a harbour. The town was a mere dark mass, so confused that it might have been a jumble of black rocks, save that, here and there, were tiny lights—lights evidently in upper windows. From one hidden casement near by, that must have been open and uncurtained, a gleam fell upon the side of a villa revealing every detail of shutter and balcony as well as a strip of bright ornament painted on the wall. The harbour was made manifest by two black piers with a light at the end of each—one green, one red—by a sheen, like that of quicksilver, on the water in the basin and by a row of lamps upon the three sides of the quay.

Beyond the harbour was a towering dull mass that I knew to be Monaco. It was picked out by a few dots of light which came, no doubt, from scattered rooms and by vague towers scarcely visible before the sullen curtain of the sky.

To the east there stood out, very cleanly cut against

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

the delicate light of the coming day, certain black pinnacles and domes. They looked like the peaks of some fantastic oriental temple but I recognised them as belonging to the Casino and the great hotel.

Clear in the heaven, above these pinnacles and domes, blazed one large, brilliant star. It was, I imagine, the very Star in the East that two thousand years ago shone over the stable at Bethlehem.

## XXVI

### MONTE CARLO

**M**ONTE CARLO<sup>1</sup> lies on the very edge of the sea at the foot of a broken range of grey hills as if it were a patch of flowers at the foot of an ancient wall. As a town it takes the form of a sloping pile of houses and terraces which, when the sun falls on them, are a brilliant maize-yellow with splashes of white, of russet-red for the roofs and of green for the palms and the gardens. Viewed at sundown, from a long way off, it would seem as if the foot of the cliff, where it touches the sea, had been gilded with dull gold.

Compared with the old towns around it Monte Carlo is so new, so fresh, so bright that it may be the city of youth, an embodiment of youth itself, of careless, reckless, sensuous youth. It is so young that there is not a wrinkle on its face, although the cheek may be a trifle tinted and the lips unduly red. Its streets recall the gaiety of youth, its lavish gardens proclaim the indulgence and the luxury of youth, its crags and ravines the spirit of adventure, its clear sky the far vision of youth and its blazing sun the fierce passion of youth.

The gorgeous white Casino would seem to realise, in such a city, the fantasy of youth. It is so immense, so impossible, so unlike any conception of sober middle age,

<sup>1</sup> The name Monte Carlo is derived from Prince Charles III. of Monaco.

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

so unreal, so daring. It conforms to the type of no ordinary building. Its architecture is not of this world of common things, although it may possibly approach that of the exuberant temple in white on the top of a wedding cake.

The Casino, in its extravagance, is indeed just such a castle in the air as a young man would build, a fabric of his dream, his palace of delight. The very town tingles with life, with excitement, with restlessness, with the playfulness of everything. It is a butterfly town, for it lives only for a few gay months. The air is laden with the scent of flowers, while the honeymoon wind lies asleep on the heaving bosom of the deep.

Moreover it is a town of the south; of the warm, indolent south, where, as Sancho Panza would say, there is—whatever happens—“still sun on the wall.” Here in the south, as compared with the north, the seasons are reversed. The winter is the time for pleasure; the summer for rest, for seclusion within shut doors and, it may be, for forgetfulness of things.

The winter in the north is symbolic of the closing days of life and of the weariness of old age; for the world has then become cold, dark and cheerless, as well as indifferent and possibly unkind. The summer in the south is, in its turn, the symbol of the end of the pageant of youth. The gardens are faded and parched up, the flowers are withered and dead, the grass is a waste of arid brown, the fountains are dry and the very earth is cracked with thirst. The world, spent and panting, has sunk into a drugged sleep like a man exhausted by a fever. The days of riotous living have come to an end; passion has burnt itself out; the rivers of pleasure are



MONTE CARLO FROM MONACO.



## Monte Carlo

now beds of stone and the Dead Sea apple is the only fruit left on the tree.

As the southern winter begins again the freshly-sown grass springs up; the lawns become green; the buds open; the roses, the heliotrope, the geraniums and the mimosa break into flower and the world is as gay as the sun and a caressing wind can make it.

It is then a tempting time to think of the drab, mist-shrouded island of England with its sodden fields and the rain dripping from the thatch, of London, of those sad houses and those awful streets, of the slush-covered roads, of the muffled faces and the blue hands, of the hours of semi-darkness, of the sun that is seen as a red disc in a fog.

Because Monte Carlo, as a town, appears to be symbolic of all that is young it must not be assumed that its inhabitants have acquired eternal youth. Many attempt it, many struggle to attain it with an eagerness which is pathetic and pitiable. They are like gaily-dressed ghosts, a little stiff in movement, following a figure that dances before them like a faun. There is a butterfly called "The Painted Lady" and perhaps it will suffice to say that the existence of this fluttering thing will come often to the minds of those who stroll along the Terrace in the sun.

Apart from its suggestion of youthfulness Monte Carlo is a town full of remarkable contrasts as extreme as the black shadow of a cypress on a marble wall. On one side of the haven, with its chapel to Ste. Dévote, rises the great rock of Monaco. On its summit stand the palace, the fortress and the little town—all three so staid, so grey, so very, very old—just as they have stood in com-

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

pany through some six hundred years. On the other side of the chapel, on rising ground, lies Monte Carlo, modern in every fibre of its being, a town that has sprung up in a night like a gaudily-tinted fungus, a brilliant, vivid place, slashed with colour like a jester's coat, as ephemeral as a rainbow, since any change in the public taste may cause it to fade into nothingness.

On the crest of the hill above Monte Carlo there stands, against the skyline, the massive monument in stone set up by the Emperor Augustus to mark the victory of Rome over a horde of savages; while below, by the edge of the sea, are the pinnacles of the Casino, a monument in papier mâché to mark the subjection of a cultured folk to the mastery of a passion.

Climbing the mountain behind the town is still the ancient road that, more than two thousand years ago, led from the Roman forum into Gaul; while, by the water's edge, on the other hand, are the railway, the motor track and a hydroplane that has just flown over from Corsica.

All around Monte Carlo, from the east to the west, are the cave-dwellings of prehistoric men, a brutish people clad in wolf skins; while in the town itself are hotels of unparalleled luxury and, on the Terrace, a company of pampered men and women decked in all the "purple and fine linen" that the world can provide.

Still more curious is it that the great modern forts of Mont Agel and the Tête de Chien actually look down upon a line of fortified camps and stone strongholds built by the Ligurians before the dawn of history.



## XXVII

### SOME DIVERSIONS OF MONTE CARLO

**T**HE *General Atmosphere*.—The atmosphere of Monte Carlo is the subject of some comment. It is in fact complained of. The air over the town is not said to be unpleasant in colour; it is not, for example, stated to be green or yellow. The charge is that the atmosphere is “vitiated.” Now in the dictionary “to vitiate” is said to mean “to corrupt, debase or contaminate” and therefore the accusation is a grave one.

In defence it can be claimed that the moral atmosphere in Monte Carlo is not so vitiated as it is in London or in Paris. There are visitors to the principality—both men and women—who are indulgently described as “undesirable”; but they are not peculiar to Monte Carlo, nor do they form even a conspicuous item in its holiday population.

Moreover the innocent visitor to the town is not of necessity thrust into the society of these people. If they are not desired they can be avoided as easily as they can be at Trouville or at Brighton. Monte Carlo may not be sanctimonious, but it does not flaunt its vices as some towns do their virtues.

Moreover so well is Monte Carlo controlled that the young lady, when necessity demands, can walk from the

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

Opera House to her hotel without fear of being incommoded, a venture that she would not essay in either London or Paris; while she will see less to offend her on the Casino Terrace than in the Bois de Boulogne. As for the young man he is more free from molestation in the boulevards of Monte Carlo than he would be in Regent Street.

Those who wish to live the plain, unemotional life of a French country town will find that Monte Carlo fulfils their needs. They will meet with neither shocks nor distractions unless they seek them; for the circle within which the florid society of the town revolves is—like the roulette wheel—extremely small; whereas the quiet streets of Monaco, the olive groves, the hill paths, the lonely walks form a world that opens far.

*The Gambling.*—The strictures bestowed upon the gaming rooms are apt to be a little violent and sweeping. I assume that no one can say a word in favour of gambling, nor even excuse it. It is no doubt a feeble apology to claim that there are degrees of gambling, that every race-course and every Bourse exhibits a more pernicious and more damaging form of “play” than can be laid to the charge of the Casino. The gambler at Monte Carlo injures no one directly but himself. He knows at least that the Administration is above suspicion and that the same virtue cannot be claimed for the whole body of bookmakers. Gambling on the public markets may implicate innocent people to their undoing and when it deals with the necessities of life and leads to the making of “corners” in this commodity or in that it may involve a whole community in loss and distress. There is indeed a wide difference between



MONTE CARLO : THE TERRACE, CHRISTMAS DAY.



## Some Diversions of Monte Carlo

gambling with plaques on a green cloth and gambling with corn.

Play at the Casino is for the reckless rich and the foolish and these happen to be two varieties of mankind peculiarly difficult to control. When once it is understood that, in the long run, the Tables *must* win and do win then let the poor man be advised. The fool will not accept advice, the rich man does not need it and so the game goes on.

It is, no doubt, an equally feeble defence to point out that the Casino does great good with its gains. It keeps the little principality in perfect order and makes it a reliable health resort. It is no vain boast to say that Monte Carlo is the cleanest and trimmest town in France, that it is dustless and that its sanitation is good. The Casino provides the police and the public officers, maintains the roads and a garden which is the delight of many, while it affords to its people a degree of comfort and security which is not to be belittled at the present day. Moreover through funds derived from the Administration churches and museums are built, schools and hospitals are maintained and real poverty is abolished. These facts do not make gambling a virtue, but they serve to temper a slashing and wholly destructive criticism.

A large proportion of people gamble for what they call "the fun of the thing." The term is difficult to define, but if they find amusement and can afford that amusement there is little to be said.

It is unnecessary to describe the *salles de jeu*. They have been pictured—with exact or inexact details—a hundred times and have figured more often in works of

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

fiction than have any other actual apartments in the world. The miscellaneous people who cluster round the tables are said to provide an interesting study in faces. The study is limited. All are supposed to be "playing"—playing, it may be assumed, as children play at a game—but their countenances are so sad and so serious that a stranger to the "games" of modern life might think that they were sitting round a post-mortem table with a deceased person laid out on the cloth. An observer endowed with especial gifts might detect evidences of greed, of anxiety, of despair, of forlorn hope, but to an ordinary looker-on there is little to note beyond a general expression of uneasy boredom.

*The Pigeon Shooting.*—There is one blot on Monte Carlo—a large, crimson blot—in the form of the pigeon shooting. This diversion takes place on a pleasant green just below the terrace of the Casino, between it and the sea. There lies a level lawn upon which one might expect to see lads and lasses playing croquet; but in the centre of the grass are certain slabs of concrete arranged in a curve with horrible precision. They may be the marks upon which blindfolded criminals are stood when ranged out to be shot, but this execution yard is used for a different purpose.

On the concrete disks, when the sport is in progress, iron traps are placed and into each of these a pigeon, half-crazed with fright, is stuffed. The trap drops open with a clatter, the bird sees before it the quiet blue of heaven, rises on its wings, and in a second is either maimed or dead. If not too badly wounded it may flutter over the fence and fall into the sea to be grabbed by a man in a boat, for some half-dozen boats are always

## Some Diversions of Monte Carlo

waiting under the lee of the rock for such choice windfalls.

People in some numbers watch this vile massacre from the terrace, but their concern—almost to a man—is with the pigeon. If the pigeon escapes unharmed, as occasionally happens, there is a gasp of relief and gratification. The bird so saved generally alights on the Casino roof and, in course of time, no doubt joins the fearless crowd of pigeons who haunt the roadway and strut among the out-of-door tables of the Café de Paris. There is a curious bond uniting this community of birds, the common tie of having been condemned to death and of having been by accident reprieved.

In pigeon shooting from traps there is not the faintest element of sport. It is merely an exhibition of mean brutality which is totally opposed to the British conception of sport and it is gratifying to note that among the competitors in this contemptible game an English name is uncommon. The terrified pigeon pegged out to be shot at has practically no chance, while the skill displayed by the most apt of the pseudo-sportsmen is of a paltry order.

To realise a turning of the tables it should happen one day that the sides of the trap would drop and reveal, not a shivering pigeon, but a live man-eating tiger who, with his yellow and black stripes showing well against the green, would stalk, snarling, towards the firing party. It would be interesting to see these deadly marksmen bolt screaming right and left and throw themselves into the sea to be picked up by the boatmen on the look-out for wounded pigeons.

*The Theatre.*—The opera, the concerts and the minor

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

entertainments at Monte Carlo are famous and are allowed to be of very high order. A series of ballets also occupies the season and these too are approved by heads of families. It is to be owned that in most of the ballets a love element is prominent, but the love-making is conducted on such formal and gymnastic lines that it is not likely to encourage imitators.

The young man, according to accepted practice, pursues the lady. In doing so he revolves like a top, while she also gyrates after the manner of that toy. He rubs his chest with his hand to show that his heart is affected. She then lifts her foot above her head to show that she is unmoved by the information. He pursues her again but this time with bounds. She retreats with tiny steps and ultimately takes refuge in the extreme corner of the stage by the footlights. Here she wriggles her shoulders and puts a forefinger in the corner of her mouth. He is much encouraged by these evidences of a dawning amiability and leaps repeatedly into the air. They then dance together with some exuberance and finally he grasps her by the waist and turns her upside down, so that her head rests on the boards. This shows that they are engaged; a conclusion which is approved by a sudden crowd of lightly clad villagers in antics of bewildering violence.

*The Dog Show.*—A feature of the season at Monte Carlo is the Dog Show. It is held on the terrace and is unique of its kind. It is not really a dog show but rather a dogs' afternoon party or *conversazione*, where dogs of both sexes meet, renew acquaintances, gossip after their fashion with much tail-wagging and at times cut one another or quarrel. There are no stands upon



## Some Diversions of Monte Carlo

which the dogs are staged, no kennels, no baskets with rugs in which they lie curled up and bored to death, no posts to which they can be tied and howl. There are no placards, no cards, no advertisements of dog biscuits, no straw and, indeed, none of the paraphernalia of an actual dog show.

The affair is, in reality, a Show of Dog Owners held for the edification and amusement of the dogs and, incidentally, of others. The dog owners (mostly ladies) are dressed in their very best, as they should be when on show, and are led about by the dogs through a cheerful, rambling crowd. At intervals a man with a megaphone shouts from the bandstand the names of certain dog owners. Whereupon the dogs lead their owners, thus selected, into a circle beneath the megaphone and some judging takes place. There is a general hubbub, much chattering and barking and some craning of necks when an exceptionally pretty owner occupies the ring.

At the end rosettes, as badges of merit, are handed to the fortunate and are affixed to the dogs' collars. The dog who is pleased with what his owner has won trots off with contentment and with the lady; but the dog who is dissatisfied sits obstinately down, in spite of all protests, and proceeds to remove the offensive emblem with his foot.

*Golf.*—In the early hours of the day there is often a spectacle provided in Monte Carlo which is difficult to appreciate. A number of persons—young, middle-aged and ancient, male and female—will arise at an unwonted hour, scramble through breakfast and start to climb up a cliff of 8,000 feet. They cannot be making this arduous ascent to see the sun rise, for the sun is already up.

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

They can hardly be contemplating a view from the height, for the hill may be hidden in mist. They could not be hastening to a pilgrimage church to pray, because they do not look devotional enough; nor is there a suggestion of piety in their dress, for they wear boots heavy with nails, knickerbockers and a reckless type of hat.

They are ascending some 3,000 feet under arduous conditions for the purpose of knocking a ball—a small and expensive ball—along the ground with a stick. This is golf; a proceeding that is with many one of the rare joys of life. Golf has many charms and not the least is that it is a game for everyone. It fires the youth with ambition and comforts the aged, for it fosters the delusion that the end of their days is not yet. The inefficient can play with the expert, without heartburnings and without reproach and receive sympathy in the place of sarcasm. The lamb, indeed, can lie down with the lion and now and then bleat, in the golfer's tongue, "like as we lie." The man who wishes to be alone can play alone. The man who loves company can "go round" in a party of four and chatter to them all at once and all the time. Golf too is a discipline, for the spirit of golf is hope. The golfer who has abandoned hope is lost. Lost too is the fatalist who knows he is in a bunker before he gets there.

Golf, moreover, is played under pleasant conditions in the open air, among sand dunes, or by sea beaches, or on breezy downs and in light-hearted surroundings; for there are few links that are not picturesque and cheery. It is besides a pleasant game to watch for the human element in it is so interesting. There is, for



MONTE CARLO : THE CASINO GARDEN.



## Some Diversions of Monte Carlo

example, that fascinating disproportion between the effort made and the result that may be attained. The man at the tee stands with rigid limbs, with every muscle tense, with clenched teeth and a fixed glare in the eye. Then comes a swish with a club that—if a sword—would decapitate an ox and, as a result, the ball dribbles languidly a few mocking feet. If the man fails by misapplied violence the lady is apt to fail by moulding her action on the photographic pose of lady players in the society journals. She wants to get to the “follow through” attitude, when her club will be in the air, her face in a good light and the tip of her right shoe just touching the ground.

The caddies too are an interesting company to watch. Being young they are unable to restrain the expression of the emotions and this is often disconcerting. When a fine shot is made the aspect of the caddie is that of serious anxiety, for he has to keep the ball in sight. When a really bad stroke is taken he *must* laugh and when he is compelled—in order to conceal his laughter—to bury his face in the breast of a fellow-caddie the sight of the convulsed boy, hanging on to a friend, calls for great restraint on the part of the player.

The fragments of English picked up by foreign caddies are always curious and nearly always unhappy. I recall a caddie in Egypt who spoke nothing but Arabic; but who, after a very woeful shot burst out, to my surprise, with the petulant remark, “Hell’s own luck!” I learnt later that he used to “carry” for a profane judge.

An excellent motor-bus service takes the golfer up to the links direct, or, if he prefers it, he can ascend by

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

train to La Turbie and climb the rest of the way by the path. The links are on a breezy plateau just below the peak of Mont Agel and at the height of some 3,000 feet above the sea. It is a plateau that means well, that intends to be orderly but is always backsliding and reverting to savagery. It is constantly tempted to break out into a precipice or lapse into a gorge but restrains itself just in time. Its praiseworthy efforts to become a green plateau are almost pathetic but it gives way often and original sin crops out in the form of horrible rocks.

The result is an area of rugged land of great variety and picturesqueness, a beautiful medley of half-tamed meads and wild boulders, of smooth lawns like sheets of green velvet amid grey and wizened crags. The view is astounding. To the north are the Maritime Alps, peak after peak, deep in snow; to the south is the warm, blue Mediterranean and, often enough, the ghostly island of Corsica lying on the sea like a lilac cloud. On either side is a stretch of coast of immeasurable extent, leading far down into Italy on the east and, on the west, ranging beyond the Lerin Islands and the Esterels to St. Tropez, near Hyères, a distance of some fifty miles. The club house is a model of modern comfort and as the restaurant is controlled by the Hôtel de Paris the golfer and the crowd of visitors can obtain as good a lunch on this bare mountain-top as they would obtain in Monte Carlo and that too with a better appetite. The success of the club is largely due to the untiring efforts of the secretary, Mr. Galbraith Horn, whose geniality, capacity and kindness are held in grateful memory by every visitor to Mont Agel.

## Some Diversions of Monte Carlo

Coming back from the links in the motor-bus the whispered conversations that may be overheard are illustrative and will vary much according to the speaker. A fat man may be saying, "The gravy was the best I ever tasted," and the lean man, "Although I did it in five I had to halve the hole"; while a lady may remark, "Well! how she *could* come out in that hat I don't know!"

## XXVIII

### AN OLD ROMAN POSTING TOWN

**A**ROUND Monte Carlo the mountains crowd down to the sea with such menace as to threaten to push the light-hearted town into the deep, for the sloping ledge to which it holds is narrow. Thus it is that hanging above Monte Carlo is a steep mountain side, half slope, half precipice, green wherever an olive tree or a pine can cling, grey where the rock lies bare or where the cliff soars upwards.

On the summit of this stupendous barrier and at a height of 1,574 feet is La Turbie. Gazing up from the streets of Monte Carlo the place can be located, although neither its walls, nor its houses nor any part of it are visible; but it is indicated by two remarkable objects which stand out clear on the sky line. They are strange and ill-assorted. One of the objects is a vast pillar or tower of stone, of the colour of a wheat stalk. From the Casino garden, half a mile below, it looks like a gigantic brick standing on end and turned edgewise. This is the Roman monument of Augustus erected over 1,900 years ago. The other object, placed by its side, is a coral-pink hotel that may have sprung up in the night. Its outline is intentionally fantastic for it is built in "the Oriental style" in the belief that the simple might mistake it for a mosque or a palace of the caliphs.





**LA TURBIE : THE ROMAN MONUMENT.**



## An Old Roman Posting Town

In spite of its appearance it is popular and well esteemed. It is a theatrical creation as gaudy as if it were flooded by a rose-tinted limelight and as out of place on the top of the stately cliff as a cheap Paris bonnet on the head of the Venus de Milo.

There are many ways of reaching La Turbie from the lower ground. For carriages there is the Cemetery road. It is so called, not because it is dangerous to motorists, but because it passes a cemetery. It winds in and out among the prehistoric fortifications of Mont des Mules and Mont Justicier, but is so irresolute, so capricious, so inclined to go any way rather than up hill to La Turbie that the route is exasperating. The track of the road is like the track of a drunken man who has become obstinate and deaf to all persuasions to go straight home.

There are two mule paths up to the town, one on either side of the Vallon des Gaumates, the Moneghetti path on the west and the Bordina on the east. These paths are at least direct and know where they are going. They are paved with cobble stones, are arranged in long steps, are as monotonous as a treadmill and probably as tiring. They are paths that might have climbed up the penitential heights in Dante's "Purgatorio." Still they pass by pleasant ways among the shadows of the olives and the slips of garden piled one above the other on green ledges. Moreover they are the old primitive roads of the country, the roads trod by the mediæval pedlar, by the wandering monk and by the errant knight. Of all works of man throughout the ages they are among the oldest and the least disturbed by change.

It is possible also to reach La Turbie from Monte Carlo by the rack-and-pinion railway. The traveller sits

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

in a carriage that slopes like a roof and is pushed up hill from behind by an engine that puffs like an asthmatic person overpowered by rage. There are three stations to be passed on the way. Nothing happens at two of these stations except that the train stops. It is merely a ceremonial act. There would be anxiety and inquiries of the guard if anyone got in or got out. One station is in a drear rocky waste, far removed from the haunts of men. The only passenger that could be expected to alight here would be a scapegoat laden with the sins of Monte Carlo and eager to get away from the unquiet world and be lost in the wilderness.

La Turbie, or Turbia, was a Roman town. It stood on the famous road that led from Rome into Gaul. It was a busy and prosperous place that probably attained to its greatest importance about two thousand years ago, for the town goes back to a period before the time of Christ. When La Turbie was at the height of its vigour Monaco was a barren rock. Indeed when the first building appeared upon Monaco La Turbie was already more than twelve centuries old.

The ancient Roman road—the Aurelian Way as it was called—ran from the Forum at Rome to Arles on the banks of the Rhone. Its total length, according to Dr. George Müller, was 797 miles. It was commenced in the year B.C. 241 and its construction occupied many decades.

Starting from the Forum it followed the coast northwards. It passed through Pisa, Spezia and Genoa. Then turning westwards it came to Ventimiglia, where it followed the line of the present main street. It passed through Bordighera, along the Strada Romana of that

## An Old Roman Posting Town

town, and creeping under the foot of the Rochers Rouges it entered Mentone. It crossed the little torrent of St. Louis close to the beach and then began to mount upwards. Its course through Mentone is indicated by the Rue Longue. Thence it ascended to the Mont Justicier and so reached the crest of the hill at La Turbie. Between Mentone and La Turbie there are still to be found traces of this ancient highway which have been left undisturbed among the olive woods.

The road entered La Turbie by that gate which is still called the Portail Romain, made its way through the town with no little pomp and passed out by the Portail de Nice on the west. It now crossed the present Grand Corniche road, which it followed for a while, and then dipped pleasantly into the valley of Laghet. Leaving the convent on its right it turned to La Trinité-Victor and so moved onwards until it reached the great and important Roman city of Cimiez, then known as Cemenelum. Here we may take leave of it.

On this venerable highway La Turbie occupied a position of much interest. It marked the highest point attained by the Via Aureliana in its long journey. To the Romans it was the "Alpis summa." It stands on the ridge or col which connects Mont Agel with the Tête de Chien and represents the summit of the pass between those heights. More than that—as a landmark visible for miles—it pointed out to the world the ancient frontier between Italy and Gaul and, in later years, the line that divided Provence from Liguria.

To the Roman traveller by the Aurelian Way La Turbie was a place of some significance. It was a goal

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

to be attained. When once the weary man had passed through the gate of Turbia he could sit himself down on a cool bench in its shady street, wipe his brow, loosen his pack, let drop his staff and feel that the worst of the journey was over. He had crossed the frontier into Gaul and was almost within sight of the comforting city of Cemenelum of which old travellers, gossiping in the Forum, had told so much.

La Turbie was a posting town that marked a critical stage in the journey from the Eternal City. It was a place of great bustle and commotion in the spacious Roman days, for companies, large or small, were constantly arriving or leaving and whichever way they went they must halt at the col. How often children playing outside the gate would suddenly rush back to their mothers, with shrill cries, to say that they could see a party winding up the hill towards the town! How often the people would hurry out to see what kind of folk they were and to guess as to their means and their needs!

Sometimes it would be a body of Roman soldiers, marching in rigid column, under the command of a dignified centurion. At another time some great patrician, with his vast retinue, would mount up to the town. He would grumble, no doubt, at the steepness of the hill, but would be coaxed by the bowing governor to come to the edge of the cliff and look down upon Monaco Bay and upon the glorious line of coast spread out upon either side of it. The patrician lady, alighting from her litter, would thrill the little place with curiosity and excitement. The young women of La Turbie would note keenly the fashion of her dress—the last new *mode*



A CORNER IN LA TURBIE.





## An Old Roman Posting Town

of Rome—and the manner in which her hair was “done” in order to imitate both the one and the other when the *grande dame* had swept on to Arles. The suite at the patrician’s heels would be accosted by the gossips of La Turbie and by the young men about town eager to glean the latest news from the great city, news from the lips of men who but a month or so ago had strolled about the Forum or had viewed some amazing spectacle from the galleries of the Coliseum.

The slaves, who led the pack-horses and carried the litters, would chat with the local slaves in the stables and in the meaner wine shops and discuss the general trend of affairs in this outcast, deity-deserted country and compare the vices of their respective masters and the meanness or beauty of their respective ladies. Even the dogs in the cavalcade would excite the interest of the dogs on the hill. One may imagine the supercilious sniff with which the dog that had tramped all the way from Rome would regard the dog stranded on this bleak col and the snarl with which the La Turbie dog—more wolf than dog—would challenge the pampered intruder.

At another time a company of traders would pass through the town—strangely-garbed men speaking an unknown tongue and followed by a train of mules and donkeys laden with bales of rare stuffs and with panniers filled with mysterious and glittering things. One can see the pretty girl of La Turbie coaxing a grey-bearded merchant in a black burnous to open a pannier and let her have a peep and picture the staring eyes of the crowd that would hang over her shoulder.

On another day a troupe of Roman dancing girls would trip through the gate with a ripple of bright colour

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

and with roguish glances, to the great disturbance of the young men of La Turbie who would be too shy to speak to them, too unready to reply to their city banter and too conscious of their own *gaucherie*.

On occasion, too, a party of gladiators would swagger along on their way to the arena of Cimiez, splendid men, perfect in form, firm of foot, alert in carriage they would swing down the street with a rhythmical step and would be followed by the children through the gate and far along the road, and followed, too, by the eyes of every young woman in La Turbie who could find a window or a gap on the wall that gave a view of the highway.

The main street of the town, along which the great road bustled, must have presented, on these days of coming or going, a scene of much animation. Here were the chief inns and the wine booths, the little local shops, the fruit stalls, the cobbler's vaulted niche where sandals were repaired, the cutler's store very bright with bronze, the houses of the dealers in corn and fodder and most assuredly some begrimed hut where an old crone sold curiosities and souvenirs of the place, native weapons and ornaments, a hillman's headdress, strange coins dug up outside the walls, bright pieces of ore found among the mountains, the local snake in a bottle, some wolf's teeth and a shell or two from Monaco beach. In the lesser streets would be the stables for the pack-horses and the mules, the cellars for goods in transit, the hovels for the slaves, the moneylenders' dens, the compounds for the soldiers and the huts of the wretched wild-eyed Ligurians who, under the lash of their masters, did the mean work of the town.

## An Old Roman Posting Town

La Turbie was indeed in these times a great caravanserai, a halting place on the march of civilisation, a post by the side of the inscrutable road that led from the wonder-teeming East to the dull, unawakened land of the West, a road that carried with it the makings of a people who would dominate the world when the power and the glory of Rome had passed away.

## XXIX

### THE TOWER OF VICTORY

**O**F Turbia of the Roman days practically no trace exists with the notable exception of the Great Monument which is very much more than a trace. After the Romans went away La Turbie—although well stricken in years—was subjected to that pitiless discipline which straitened and embittered the younger days of every town along the shores of the Mediterranean. Its history differs but in detail from the early history of Nice or Eze, or of Roquebrune. The Lombards and the Saracens in turn fell upon it like wild beasts and shook it nearly to death. It was burned to a mere heap of cinders and stones. It was looted with a thoroughness that not even a modern German could excel. It was besieged and taken over and over again. At one time the Guelphs held it and at another the Ghibellines. It was bought and sold and had as many successive masters as there were masters to have. It belonged now to Genoa and then to Ventimiglia, now to Monaco and then to Eze.

Throughout the restless Middle Ages it was a small fortified town of little military importance. It had its circuit of walls and its gates, its keep and its battlements; but, at its best, it was a place with more valour than strength. No doubt it looked sturdy enough on the top

## The Tower of Victory

of the hill, a neat compact town as round as a jar with the great white Roman monument erect in its midst, like a dead lily in a stone pot.

During the intervals when it was not being looted or burned it was treated with some dignity; for when the Counts of Provence were the masters of La Turbie they nominated a *châtelain* or governor from among "the first gentlemen of Nice." The distinction thus conferred was a little marred by the fact that the gentleman was not required to reside in the town. Gentlemen with very sonorous names and connected with "the best families" were, from time to time, nominated for this post; but they do not seem to have added much to the comfort of the place as a residence.<sup>1</sup>

The visitor to La Turbie, whether he arrives by the rack-and-pinion railway or by the mule-path, will assuredly make his way at once to the Belvedere to see that view which has moved the guide books to such unanimous rapture. He will probably be met on his way by a man—very foreign in appearance—who will wish to sell him an opera glass on one morning and a square of carpet on the next. He will also come upon a camera obscura, set up for the benefit of those who prefer to see through a glass darkly and who would sooner view a scene when reflected on a white table-cloth in a dark room than gaze upon it with the naked eye.

At the camera obscura kiosk postcards are sold together with articles which the vendor asserts are souvenirs and mementoes of La Turbie. These things for remembrance are hard to understand. One wonders why a polished slate inkstand from Paris, a mineral from

<sup>1</sup> "Chorographie du Comté de Nice," by Louis Durante, 1847.

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

(possibly) a Cornish mine, a sea-shell from the tropics or some beads from Cairo should call to mind a mediæval town in Provence and the wars of the Guelphs and the Ghibellines.

When the pilgrim in his progress has passed both the man with the carpet and the things that will keep green the memory of La Turbie he can enjoy the view that opens out on the edge of the cliff. It is a view that not even a camera obscura can enhance. There is the line of coast that sweeps from Bordighera on the east to the Esterels on the west; while below, as a bright splash of yellow, white and red, is Monte Carlo. The spectator looks directly down upon Monte Carlo as he would view a thing on the pavement from the top of a tower. It is not often that one can see at a glance an entire European state from frontier to frontier and from seaboard to hinterland; but here is laid out before the eye every foot of the principality of Monaco as complete as on a map.

Monte Carlo is largely a display of roofs among which it is possible to pick out those of familiar hotels and those of the villas of friends. There is an odd sense of indelicacy about the bold inspection of a friend's roof. There is nothing indecent about a roof but there is an impression of spying, of looking down the chimneys and of taking advantage of an exceptional position, for a roof is not the best part of a house and in the case of friends it somehow comes into the category of things that you ought not to see.

The most precious object in La Turbie is the Monument, although it is now in a state of woeful decay. It stands in a dismal waste where clothes are spread out



A STREET IN LA TURBIE.



LA TURBIE : OLD WINDOWS IN RUE DROITE.





## The Tower of Victory

to dry and where fowls wander about scratching, as if searching for Roman remains. It is surrounded by houses which appear to have contracted the leprous complaint which has attacked the great trophy. As a monument of melancholy it is not to be surpassed. As a place of dreariness the spot where it is found can hardly be exceeded in pathos. It needs only the solitary figure of Job, sitting on a broken column with his face buried in his hands, to complete the picture of its desolation.

The monument was erected, or was at least completed, in the year B.C. 6. It was raised by the Roman senate to commemorate the victories of the Emperor Augustus over the tribes of southern Gaul and to record the final conquest of that tract of country. It was a colossal structure of supreme magnificence that took the form of a lofty tower very richly ornamented. It stood upon a square base formed of massive blocks of stone which are still in place, for none but an uncommon power could ever move them. The tower itself was circular and encased in marble upon which, in letters of gold, was engraved an inscription, "IMPERATORI · CÆSARI · DIVI · FILIO · AUGUSTO · PONT · MAX · IMP · XIV · TRIB · POT · XVII · S.P.Q.R." These words, which suggest a form of shorthand or a crude telegraphic code, were followed by an account of the Emperor's triumph and the names of the forty-five Alpine tribes that he had conquered. Of this imposing inscription nothing now remains. It is replaced by the feeble initials of sundry shopboys from neighbouring towns, cut with penknives in the presence of their admiring ladies.

About this tower was a round colonnade and above it another circle of pillars with statues; while on the

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

summit was a colossal effigy of the victorious emperor, eighteen feet or more in height. The whole was a stupendous work worthy of the amazing people who built it. It is now a shapeless pile as devoid of art as a crag on a mountain top. But it is still impressive by its overwhelming height, by its massiveness, and its suggestion of determined strength. High up on one side are two columns recently put in place, which show how an arcade once circled around it; but, apart from this, the whole mass looks more rock-like and more supremely simple than any work of man. Everything that made it beautiful in substance and human in spirit is gone—the colonnades, the statues, the capitals, the friezes and the carved trophies of arms.<sup>1</sup>

The destruction of this exquisite fabric commenced early and was pursued through successive centuries with peculiar pertinacity. As has been already said La Turbie, throughout its long career, was the subject of many onslaughts. No matter what may have been the purpose of the attacking party or their nationality they did not leave the town until they had devoted some time to the annihilation of the tower of Augustus. To contribute something to the breaking up of this monument seems to have been an obligation, a rite imposed upon every invading force, a local custom that could not be ignored. The Lombards appear to have commenced the work with great spirit and heartiness but with limited means. Then the Saracens came and took bolder measures, but measures founded upon imperfect scientific knowledge, for they attempted to destroy this tower of victory with fire. The Guelphs and the Ghibellines, during their intermittent

<sup>1</sup> A further account of the trophy is given in the chapter which follows.

## The Tower of Victory

occupation of La Turbie, built a fort with stones obtained from the edifice. It was a strong fort in the making of which much material was employed and the trophy became a watch tower.

As the knowledge of destructive processes improved more powerful steps were taken to uproot the tower. It was undermined and attempts were made to blow it up. These efforts were attended with some results; but the monument still stands. Finally, about the beginning of the eighteenth century a very determined attempt was made by the French to clear this arrogant pile from off the face of the earth. The work of destruction was entrusted to the Maréchal de Villars and there is no doubt that he did his best; but the monument still stands.

Quite apart from these periodic assaults the monument was, from the earliest days, regarded as a quarry and was worked with regularity and persistence age after age. In the twelfth century by permission of the Lords of Eze the marble—or what remained of it—was stripped from the walls by the Genoese and was carried away to decorate their palaces and their shrines, to build cool courts, to form terraces in gardens, to furnish the pillars for a pergola or the basin for a well. The marble of the high altar in the old cathedral of Nice came from the Roman monument. The present town of La Turbie is built in great extent from the ruins of this tower of victory; while all over the country pieces of stone, worked by the Romans in the year B.C. 6, will be found in villas, in cottage walls, in motor garages, and in goat sheds. And yet the monument still stands. This is the feature about it that inspires the greatest wonder, this feature of determined immortality; for it would seem that so long as

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

the world endures the pillar of victory will crown the everlasting hill.

It has been battered and worn by the wind, the hail and the rain of nearly two thousand years. It has been gnawed at by snow and bitten by frost. It has been slashed by lightning and shaken by earthquake. It has been shattered by hammers and picks, has been torn asunder by crowbars, cracked with fire and rent by gunpowder, but still it stands and still it will stand to the end of time.

That this ruinous old tower should have become, in early days, a thing of myths and mysteries can be no matter of surprise. That its colonnade was haunted, that its black hollows were the abode of a god and that its statues spoke in the local tongue was the belief of generations. That it was a place to fear and to be avoided at night was a maxim impressed upon every boy and girl as soon as they had ears to hear and feet that could flee.

The most remarkable quality of the trophy was the intimate knowledge of a certain kind that it was reputed to possess. Owing to this attribute it became an oracle. One of the statues—that of a god—could speak and was prepared (under conditions) to reply to appropriate questions. It must not be supposed that the tower of the Emperor Augustus became a mere inquiry office. It specialised in knowledge and the deity who presided would deal only with matters that came within the province of this particular phase of wisdom.

One might hazard the guess that the fullest information that the monument had acquired during its many years of life would relate to assault and battery, and, in

## The Tower of Victory

a less exhaustive degree, to battle, murder and sudden death. On all questions relating to violence as displayed by man it could claim to speak as an expert. It is curious, however, that on this subject the speaking statue was silent. It professed to have a knowledge of one thing and one thing only and that was not violence but human love. But even in this branch of learning it specialised for it dealt exclusively with but a phase of the subject—the constancy and sincerity of women.

The broken colonnade was no doubt a favourite resort for lovers and a listening statue could learn much as to the value of vows and would gain, during a life of centuries, experience on the topic of women's fidelity. It was upon this occult, most difficult and complex subject that the oracle had the courage to speak.

It thus came to pass that doubting husbands were in the habit of repairing to La Turbie in order to ask personal and searching questions about their wives. How the oracle was "worked" is not known. That it was susceptible to influences which still have a place in human affairs is very probable. Light is thrown upon the methods of the oracle by the writings of one Raymond Feraud, a troubadour, who in the thirteenth century composed a poem on this very subject.<sup>1</sup> The morality revealed by the writer—it may be said—belongs to that century, not to this.

It appears from the troubadour's account that Count Aymes, a prince of Narbonne, was a jealous man and probably, as a husband, very tiresome. He had some doubts as to the fidelity of his wife Tiburge and one day alarmed this cheerful lady by announcing that he pro-

<sup>1</sup> "Mon Pays, etc.," by D. Durandy.

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

posed to drag her to La Turbie and to ask the stone deity certain pertinent questions as to her recent behaviour. Tiburge was a lady of resource and before the inquiry at La Turbie took place she started for the Lerin Islands and sought an interview with no less a personage than St. Honorat. What exactly took place between the saint and the light-hearted lady, during the meeting, the troubadour does not say. Anyhow Tiburge made such confessions to St. Honorat as she thought fit, with the result that the saint absolved her, cheered her up, called her "chère fille" and assured her that all would be well. To make matters more certain St. Honorat gave her the lappet of his hood and told her to wear it on her head during the anxious inquiry at La Turbie. He assured her that with this piece of cloth on her pretty hair the "idole" would not dare to make any offensive observations. Furnished with this unfashionable head-dress the countess, cheerful to the extent of giggling, joined her morose husband and toiled up to La Turbie.

The Count Aymes asked the "idole" a number of most unpleasant questions which might have been very trying to the lady had she not been comforted by the brown rag on her head. The answers of the oracle—awaited with anxiety by the husband and with a smile by the lady—were very reassuring. Indeed the "idole" gave the lady a kind of testimonial and a certificate of character that was, under the circumstances, almost too florid. He said she was a *dame de grand mérite* and treated the count's innuendoes as unworthy of a consort and as reprehensible when applied to a woman of blameless life. He added that a lady whose head was covered by a vestment belonging to so sainted a man as St.

## The Tower of Victory

Honorat must be above reproach. His manner of dealing with this delicate affair suggests to the vulgar mind that there must have been some collusion between the recluse on the island and the "idole" in this dilapidated old tower.

Anyhow the count and the countess returned home in the best of spirits and one may assume that on the way she said more than once "I told you so." When he asked "Why don't you throw that beastly bit of old cloth away?" she would reply "Oh! I think I will keep it. I may want to use it again."

## XXX

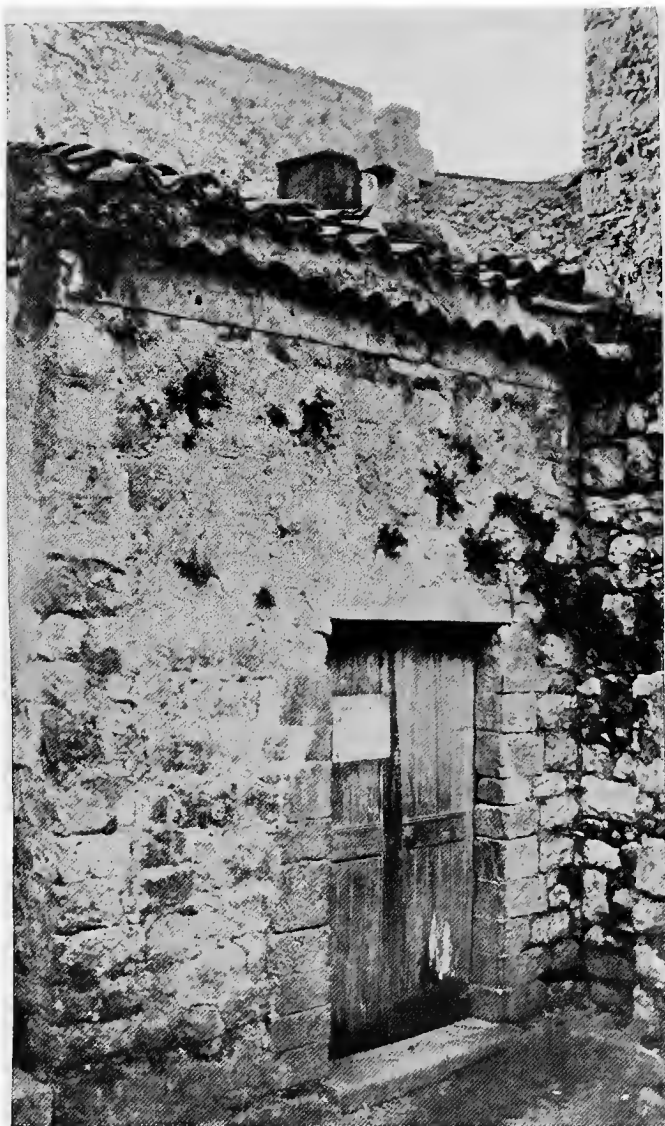
### LA TURBIE OF TO-DAY

**L**A TURBIE is a little compact town of the Middle Ages. Its narrow streets are disposed as they have been for centuries. It is entered by five gates. It has no straggling suburbs. It is complete in its tiny way and captain of itself. It lies enveloped by its walls, a warm, living thing whose heart has beaten within these encircling arms for over 2,000 years. It is quiet, for the world has left it alone. It stands by the side of the Great Corniche Road, but those who pass by in an eddy of dust heed it not. One might walk through it many times, from gate to gate, without meeting a living creature.

Yet at the foot of the hill on which La Turbie stands is Monte Carlo, the most modern of modern abodes of men. A town without walls, lying scattered in all directions like a great drop of bright paint that has fallen on a rock and spattered it. Here are the hubbub of Vanity Fair, the frou-frou of silks, the flash of bold pigments, the scent-tainted air.

Let such as are tired of this Vanity Fair and of its make-believe palaces, climb up to the hill town. As they pass through the old gateway they enter into a world that was, into a town where the streets are silent and the houses homely and venerable. The blaze of clashing colours is forgotten, for all here is grey. The bold,





LA TURBIE: THE OLD BAKEHOUSE.



## La Turbie of To-day

imperious purple of the sea is changed for the tender forget-me-not blue of a strip of sky above the roofs. The dazzle of the sun is beyond the gate, but within are shadows as comforting as "the shadow of a rock in a weary land." Such light as enters falls upon an old lichen-covered wall, upon the arch of a Gothic window and upon simple things on balconies—a garment hanging to dry, a bird-cage, a pot of lavender. To those who are surfeited with riot and unreality La Turbie is a cloister, a place of peace.

Outside the town, on the east, is the Cours St. Bernard, so named after an ancient chapel to St. Bernard which stood here. The town is entered by the gate called the Roman Gate, for it was by this way that the Roman road passed into La Turbie. The gate, which dates from the Middle Ages, has a plain, pointed arch and over it the remains of a tower. The old road passed through the town from east to west along the line of the present Rue Droite and left it by the Nice Gate which has also a pointed arch and a tower and which belongs to the same period as the Portail Romain. There are some fine old houses, strangely mutilated, in the Rue Droite and one elegant window of three arches supported by dainty columns. This pertains to a house at the corner of the Rue du Four.

The Rue du Four, or Bakehouse Street, enters the town from the Corniche Road by a modern gate passing under the houses. In this street is the ancient public bakehouse, a queer, little building, low and square, with a tiled roof and on the roof a very solid cross cut out of a block of stone. Within the building the ovens are still to be seen. M. Philippe Casimir, the learned mayor of

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

La Turbie, in his very interesting monograph<sup>1</sup> states that in old days the inhabitants paid to the Lord of La Turbie *un droit de fournage* for the privilege of using the bake-house. The impost took the form of one loaf out of every eighty. This mediæval *four* became in time the property of the town, but its use has now been long abandoned.

The Rue du Four leads to the Place Saint-Jean, the centre of the town. It is a very tiny *place*—little more than a courtyard—which derives its name from the chapel of St. Jean which stands here. The chapel has been recently rebuilt (1844) and is of no interest. In the *place* is a large and still imposing house which was the old Hôtel de Ville. Passing beneath it is a vaulted passage of some solemnity which leads to the gate known as the Portail du Recinto. The arch at the entrance of this vaulted way has a curious history. It was composed of blocks of marble taken from the monument and from that frieze of the trophy which bore the inscription. The great bulk of the inscribed stones had been removed to the museum at St.-Germain-en-Laye; but it was found that the wording was incomplete. Some letters from the list of the conquered tribes were missing. An archæologist chancing to visit La Turbie in 1867 noticed on the *voussoirs* of this arch the very letters that were wanting.

The pieces of marble were therefore removed to complete the inscription in the museum and their place was taken by common stones. To compensate La Turbie for this loss the Emperor, Napoleon III, presented to the church of St. Michael a copy of Raphael's "St. Michael"

<sup>1</sup> "La Turbie et son Trophée Romain," Nice, 1914.



LA TURBIE : LA PORTETTE.



LA TURBIE : THE FORTRESS WALL,  
SHOWING THE ROMAN STONES.



## La Turbie of To-day

from the Louvre in Paris. This picture now hangs on the left wall of the church near to the entrance.

The vaulted passage under the old Hôtel de Ville leads to a square called the Place Mitto. This piazza is, I imagine, the smallest public square in existence, for it is no larger than the kitchen area of a London house. In it is the most beautiful gate of La Turbie. It has a pointed arch and above it a low tower with three machicolations. The gate is called the Portail du Recinto—a mixture of French and Italian—which signifies the gate in the *enceinte* or main wall. It opens directly upon the Roman monument.

In order to appreciate the significance of this gate it is necessary to refer once more to the history of the great trophy. Some time in the thirteenth or fourteenth century the site of the monument was converted into a fort. The trophy itself was stripped of all its original features and was built up in the form of a round and lofty watch tower. It was ornamented at its summit by two rows of arcading. These are still to be seen and on the parapet will be observed three upright pieces of stone which are the remains of the crenellations or battlements with which the tower was surmounted. These details, which belong to the centuries named, are shown in ancient prints. The ruin, therefore, now existing is the ruin rather of the mediæval tower than of the original Roman monument. The persistent attempts to destroy the tower of La Turbie were due, in the first place, to the fact that it represented oppression and an arrogant claim to victory, and, in later years, to the fact that it was part of a fortress.

About the base of the great watch tower was a square

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

and solid keep, of which no trace remains and, beyond that, a great semicircular wall with its back to the town. This wall shut in the stronghold on the north and was terminated at the cliff's edge by a pair of towers. Now the Portail du Recinto was the gateway that pierced this encircling wall or *enceinte* and through it, and through it alone, could access to the fort be attained.

To the right of the gate is a narrow street, the Rue Capouanne. It is curved because it follows the line of the *enceinte* and is, indeed, a passage between the actual fortress wall on one side and houses on the other. This mighty thirteenth century wall is one of the most interesting relics in La Turbie. It has been cut into, here and there, to make stables, but it is still a great wall presenting many huge blocks of stone which show that it was constructed from the fabric of the monument. The Rue Capouanne ends in a modest little gate with a pointed arch green with ferns. This gate, called La Portette, gave access to the old church which stood near the west corner of the present cemetery and, therefore, above the level of the existing church. La Portette is shown in the old prints of La Turbie. Beyond La Portette and a modern house which joins it the great *enceinte* or fortress wall is continued for a little way as a curved but isolated line of masonry. Between this isolated fragment and the main wall there is a wide gap. This was cut about 1764 in order to obtain direct access to the monument for the purpose of the building of the church, which was constructed out of stones derived from the monument.

M. Casimir gives an interesting explanation of the curious name, Rue Capouanne. It was originally





LA TURBIE: THE NICE GATE.



## La Turbie of To-day

Gapeani and it is easy to understand how the G has changed to a C. In 1332 La Turbie obtained local independence, was allowed to manage its own urban affairs and to appoint a *bayle*, governor or mayor. The first *bayle* was one Jacques Gapeani and it is in his honour that the street was named. Humble as the lane may be it can at least claim an ancestry of nearly six hundred years.

Between the Place St. Jean and the Portail du Recinto is a narrow and gloomy way called the Rue du Ghetto. The name serves to recall the fact that during the troublous times of the Middle Ages Jews sought refuge in this hill town and security in the shadow of its fortress. The street is of interest on another account. During the Terror the monks of the monastery of Laghet were in fear for the safety of their much revered image of the Madonna. So in the dead of night they carried it up to La Turbie and hid it in a house in the Rue du Ghetto. The house was occupied by a pious man named Denis Lazare.<sup>1</sup> It is the first house in the street on the left hand side and high up between the first and second floors is an empty niche by means of which the house can be identified. At the moment the house is unoccupied. It is very small. A narrow stone stair leads up to the living room which takes up the whole of the first story. It is a room that has probably been altered little since 1793. There are the ancient fireplace, the massive beams in the ceiling and, by the hearth, a curious trough or basin fashioned out of a block of stone. So cramped is the house that it is hard to imagine where the Madonna was hidden, unless in the stable which opens on the street

<sup>1</sup> "La Turbie," by Philippe Casimir, Nice, 1914.

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

and constitutes the ground floor of the humble little dwelling.

The church of La Turbie is very simple and modest, subdued in its decoration and in keeping with its place. It has a steeple whose summit is shaped like a bishop's mitre and is covered with brilliant tiles which are very glorious in the sun. An inscription in the nave shows that the building was commenced in 1764 and completed in 1777, that it was constructed out of material from the monument and was erected by the hands of the people themselves.

There are in the town the remains of fine houses solidly built of stone but now turned into humble dwellings. One such house is conspicuous in the Rue de l'Eglise. The type of house that is most characteristic of La Turbie has the following features. It is narrow. Its ground floor is occupied by a deep recess in the shadow of a wide rounded arch upon which the front wall of the building is founded. Within the recess on one side is a door leading to a stable and on the other a stone stair which mounts up to the entry into the house.

There is one street with a name that always excites curiosity—the Rue Incalat. M. Casimir states that the term "incalat" indicates a paved way that is steep and it is to be noted that the Rue Incalat is the only street in La Turbie that can make any claim to be steep.

## XXXI

### THE CONVENT OF LAGHET

**F**ROM the old Roman town of La Turbie a road dips down into a lonely valley and is soon lost to view. It is an unfriendly highway that appears to turn its face from the world as if to hide among the ascetic hills. There are few signs of human life to make the road companionable, while a row of cypresses on either side seem to impose upon it a reverential silence.

At the end of the valley a great monastic building appears, with the figure of the Virgin raised aloft on its summit. It is an unexpected thing to come upon in this solitude; it is so immense, so aggressive looking, so modern, so like a great barrack. Its walls are of fawn-coloured plaster, its roof of rounded tiles of every gracious tint of brown. Its windows would appear to have been inserted as occasion required, without regard to any definite design. Some are in arched recesses; many are no more than the simple square windows of a cottage, while a few are like the lattice of a prison cell. It has a fine bell tower, with a clock, surmounted by a dome on the crest of which is the figure of Our Lady of Laghet. The building stands on a projecting rock and is approached by a bridge over a puny torrent.

Wedged uncomfortably in the gorge above the bridge is a dun hamlet that seems to be trying to efface itself.

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

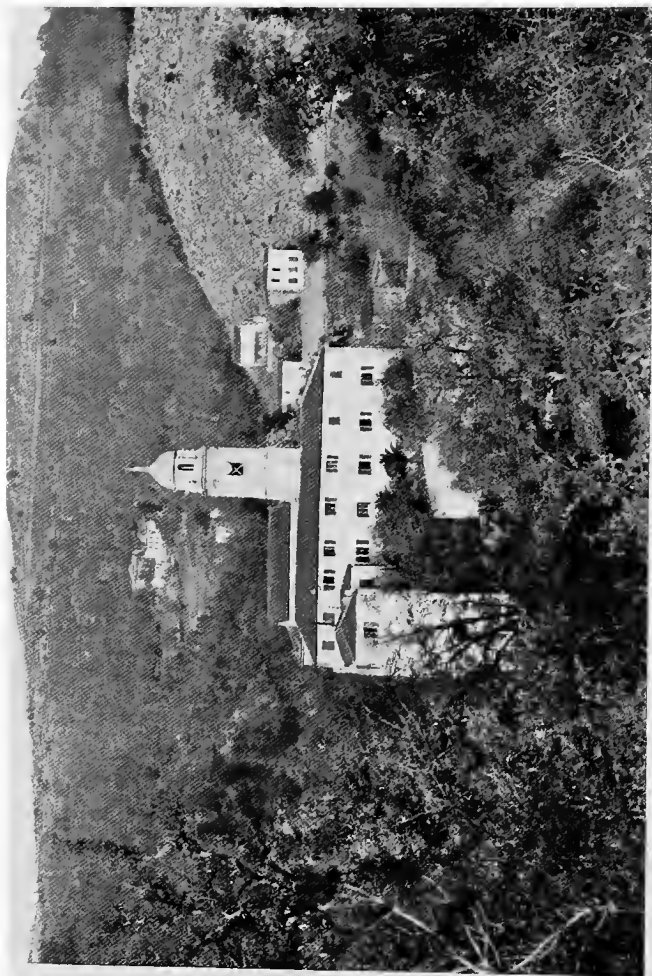
It is an apologetic little place, standing in apparent awe of the great monastery which it scarcely dares to approach. The huddled houses, hiding one behind the other, are like a cluster of shy children before a schoolmaster's door.

Various bolder and immodest objects, however, have thrust themselves between the timid village and the monastery. These are certain self-confident restaurants, a stable of almost offensive size, together with many booths and stalls, all deserted it is true, but still very assertive and unseemly. In the little square before the convent door are a bazaar where postcards and souvenirs are sold, a café, and an old fountain in a niche of the wall. Looking down upon the water in the basin of stone is a graceful figure of the Virgin. The fountain, recently restored, is said to have been erected in 1706. Mr. Hare<sup>1</sup> gives the following translation of an inscription it bears:—

“Pilgrim, you find here two streams; one descends from heaven, the other from the top of the mountains. The first is a treasure which the Virgin distributes to the piety of the faithful, the second has been brought here by the people of Nice; drink of both, if you thirst for both.”

No living creatures are in sight, except two children who are playing on the bridge. In answer to a question they state that the booths and other unclerical objects are for the pilgrims of whom they speak with pride. The pilgrims, it appears, do not come regularly. They do not come in ones and twos in the guise of weary men limping on staffs. They come on occasions and in thousands, arriving in *char-à-bancs*, in motors, in omnibuses, in gigs, in farm carts, on horses, on donkeys, on bicycles and on

<sup>1</sup> “The Riviéras,” by Augustus J. Hare, London, 1897, p. 80.



LAGHET.





## The Convent of Laghet

foot, a crowd of cheerful men and women dressed in their best. A photograph of one such pilgrimage day—exhibited as a postcard—shows the single highway of Laghet as packed with people as any part of the racecourse at Epsom, with people too somewhat of the type that is found at such a gathering. Incongruous as the crowd may be it is moved by a fine and estimable spirit much to be respected. People journey to Laghet from far and near to return thanks to Our Lady for preservation from accident, for recovery from disease, for escape from trouble; while yet a greater number come to place themselves under the protection of the revered image which has made this quiet glen so famous.

It is said that the church of the monastery stands upon the site of a little ancient chapel; that the new church was inaugurated in 1656 and that the barefooted Carmelites were established here in 1674. Miracles in the matter of recovery from sickness or of escape from dire mishap commenced in 1652, when the little old ruined chapel was still standing. From that moment the sanctuary in this remote and desolate valley was much sought after. Eminent personages made their way to Laghet and among those who came to offer homage were Charles Emmanuel II, Victor Amédée and his wife, Anne of Orleans. Since then the crowd of pilgrims has increased year by year so that on the great *festa* of Laghet, on Trinity Sunday, the little place is submerged by an overwhelming throng.

The monastery is entered through a portal of three arches which leads at once into a cloister whose walls are covered by ex-voto pictures. These pictures are small, being, as a rule, from one to two feet square. They date

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

from various periods ; one of the oldest being ascribed to the year 1793. The majority belong, however, to the nineteenth century. Not a few are so faded as to be scarcely discernible. Beneath each picture is a brief account of the incident portrayed, a large proportion of the descriptions being in Italian. Two or three out of the vast collection—which includes many hundreds—possess some artistic merit ; but the mass are crude productions as simple as the drawings of a child and as regardless of perspective and as lavish in colour as the signboard of a village inn, while a few show but a little advance upon the more earnest sketches in a prehistoric cave.

They deal with accidents and misfortunes from which the subject of the picture has escaped through the intervention of the sweet-faced Madonna of Laghet. The impression left by the gallery is that the dwellers in this corner of Europe are peculiarly liable to fall from the roofs or windows of houses, to slip over precipices, to drop into wells, to catch on fire or to find themselves under the wheels of carriages and wagons. Indeed it is a matter for marvel that they have not become extinct. It is a gallery that might suitably deck the walls of a coroner's court, the corridors of a hospital or the offices of an accident insurance company.

Here is depicted a man lying under a cart laden with immense blocks of stone. A wheel of the cart rests poised upon his leg which would normally be reduced to pulp. For his escape he has undoubted reasons to be grateful and for the recording of the fact no little justification. Here is a man under a train : the station clock shows with precision the exact moment of the accident, while, as a



LAGHET : THE ENTRANCE.



## The Convent of Laghet

writing on the wall, is the sinister and suggestive word "sortie." Here is a youth hurled from a bicycle over a bridge and in process of falling down a terrific height. In this, as, indeed, in all the pictures, the details of the victim's dress and the colour of his hair and even of his necktie are rendered with great care. In a picture of 1903, showing a girl being knocked down by a motor the details of the archaic machine of that period are so exactly portrayed as to be of historical interest.

The number of people who are dropping from scaffolds and ladders is very great. Complex horse accidents are rendered with a precision which is usually lacking in the mere narrative of these confusing events. Thus a lady and gentleman are represented as lying beneath an overturned carriage. A grotesque horse, of the type seen in pantomimes, with a vicious grin on its face, has kicked the driver from the box. This outraged man is standing on his head in the road, his body and legs being sustained, by some unknown force, in the vertical position. Here is a motor accident: the motor has plunged into a swamp. The three dislodged occupants are kneeling together, in the middle of the highway, praying; while the more practical chauffeur is holding his hands aloft and is apparently crying for help.

There are many shipwrecks in which the waves, fashioned apparently of plaster of Paris, are very terrifying. Gun accidents are numerous and troubles arising from fireworks not uncommon. Tramcar accidents, including the collisions of the same, are frequent. There are incidents also of a simpler type. In one, for instance, a gentleman is represented as slipping—probably on a banana skin—on the Rampe at Monaco. He is falling

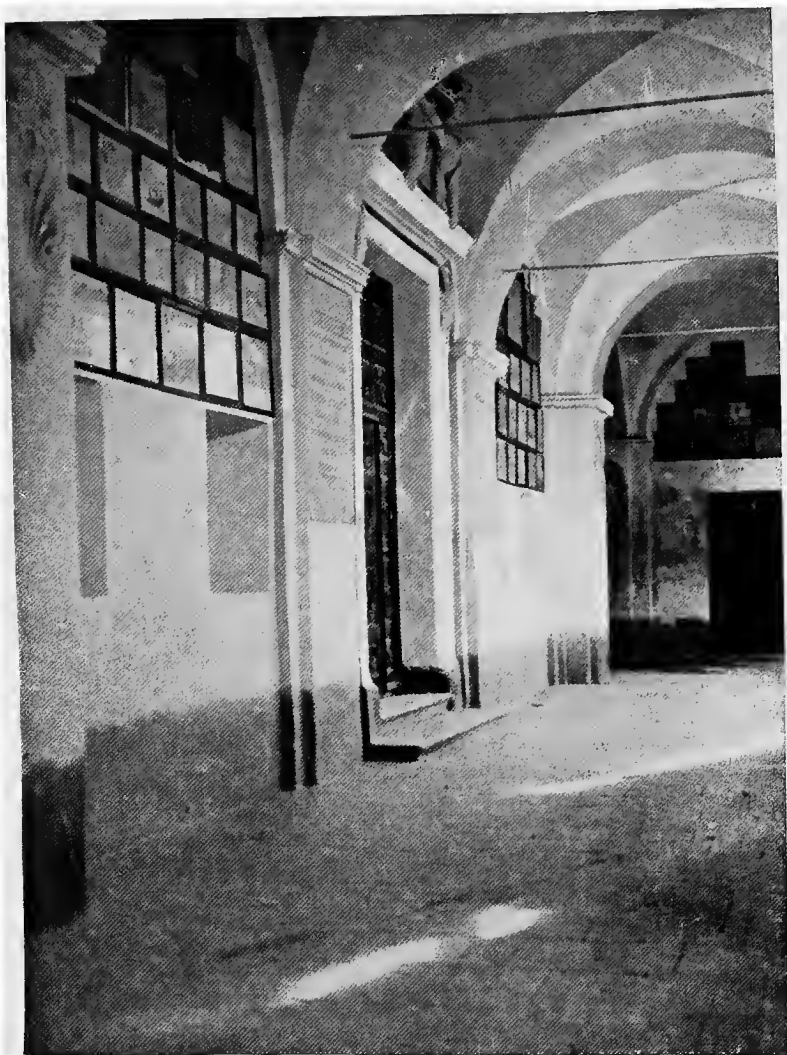
## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

heavily. Another shows a lady of eighty-three, nicely dressed and with a fan in her hand, walking indiscreetly at 7 P.M. on a plank projecting over a precipice. There is a mansion in the background from which a man—of the same size as the house—is running to the scene of this imprudent act.

There are also in the collection misadventures of an unusual character. Thus on a mountain road huge rocks are falling, in some profusion, on an omnibus. In a painting dated 1863 a child, aged fifteen months, is being eaten by a pig. The pig seems to have dragged the infant out of a cradle by its ear in order to consume it with greater ease.

Some accidents may be classified as vicarious. For example a man is shown beating a mule. He does this without inconvenience to himself; but the resentful mule, who is evidently no discerner of persons, is kicking another (and probably quite innocent) man very cruelly in the stomach with its fore hoof.

Then too there are complex happenings which must have involved a great strain upon the invention and resource of any artist who wished to be accurate. For instance here is a house being struck by lightning. The house, for the sake of clearness, is shown in section, like a doll's house with the front open. In an upper chamber are members of the family engaged in cooking. The lightning passes ostentatiously through the room, leaving the occupants unharmed; but it escapes by the front door and there kills a donkey which is lying dead on the doorstep. Then again the average artist if asked how he would proceed to paint a picture to illustrate "recovery from inflammation of the right jaw" might find himself



LAGHET : ONE OF THE CLOISTERS.





## The Convent of Laghet

perplexed since the subject is so lacking in tangible incident. The ingenious limner of Laghet is, however, at no loss and proceeds to carry out the commission with a light heart and in the following fashion. We see a bedroom with a bed in it and a chair. There are pictures on the wall. There is a table on which are a candle, a cup and a species of pot. On a cane sofa sits a solitary gentleman dressed in a frock coat and light trousers. His face is tied up in a handkerchief. The right side of the face is swollen. He appears to be about to leap from the sofa, his eyes being directed to a vision of the Madonna in a cloud on the wall. The picture clearly suggests that the sufferer has been laid up in bed; the candle hints at restless nights; the cup and pot at medical treatment. The fact that the patient is clothed in a frock coat shows improvement, while his apparent intention to spring from the sofa conveys the idea that the final cure has been sudden.

There are very many sick-room scenes, complete with puzzled doctors and weeping relations around the bedside. In certain of these illustrations individual and unpleasant symptoms are depicted with so conscientious a determination and so complete a disregard for the feelings of the onlooker as fully to support the dictum that "Art is Truth."

One picture may have puzzled the hanging committee of Laghet. It depicts a smiling man being released from prison. The occasion is one that no doubt evoked thankfulness on the part of the captive, but the inference that his incarceration was an "accident" opens up a legal point of some delicacy. Curious presents have been bestowed upon Laghet. Among them is the gift of the

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

Princess Maria Josephina Baptista. It consisted of a silver leg of the same size and weight as her own leg which was happily cured at the convent.

In certain places on the walls of this strange Cloister of Calamity hang crutches and sticks, discarded surgical appliances, boots for deformed feet, spinal supports and splints. They speak for themselves. The little crutches and the little splints speak with especial eloquence; while, as a most pathetic object amid the grosser implements of suffering, is a small steeled shoe which must have belonged to a very tiny pilgrim indeed.

On the cross-piece of one crutch a swallow has built a nest. The crutch and the swallow may almost be taken as symbolic of Laghet—the crutch the emblem of the halting cripple, the swallow of the joyous heart winging its way through the blue of heaven.

## XXXII

### THE CITY OF PETER PAN

**B**ETWEEN Monte Carlo and Mentone is the little town of Roquebrune. It stands high up on the flank of that range of hills which follows the road and which shuts out, like a wall, all sight of the world stretching away to the north.

Certain conventional phrases are used in describing the site of a village or small town. When it lies at the bottom of a hill it "nestles" and when it approaches the top it "perches." Roquebrune is distinctly "perched" upon the hillside. Indeed it appears to cling to it as a house-martin clings to sloping eaves and to keep its hold with some difficulty. The town looks unsteady, as if it must inevitably slip downwards into the road.

At some little distance behind Roquebrune is a great cliff from the foot of which spreads a long incline. It is on a precarious ledge on this slope that the place is lodged, like a pile of crockery on the brink of a shelf and that shelf tilted.

An enticing feature about any town is the approach to it, the first close sight of its walls, the glimpse of the actual entrance that leads into the heart of it. Now the entrance to Roquebrune is strange, strange enough to satisfy the expectation of any who, seeing the place from

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

afar, have wondered what it would be like near at hand. A steep path, paved with cobble stones, mounts up between two old yellow walls and at the end of the path is the town. It is entered by a flight of stone steps which, passing into the shadow of a tunnelled way beneath high houses, opens suddenly into the sunlight of the chief street of Roquebrune.

It is a cheerful little town, clean and trim. It is undoubtedly curious and as one penetrates further into its by-ways it becomes—as Alice in Wonderland would remark—“curiouser and curiouser.” It is largely a town of stairs, of straight stairs and crooked stairs, of stairs that soar into dark holes and are seen no more, of stairs that climb up openly on the outside of houses, of stairs bleached white, of stairs green with weeds and of stairs that stand alone—for the place that they led to has gone. It would seem to be a precept in Roquebrune that if a dwelling can be entered by a range of steps it must be so approached in preference to any other way.

The streets are streets by name only, for they are mere lanes and very narrow even for lanes. They appear to go where they like, so long as they go uphill. They all go uphill, straggling thither by any route that pleases them. The impression is soon gained that the people of Roquebrune are living on a curious staircase fashioned out of the mountain-side. So far as the outer world is concerned Roquebrune would be described as “upstairs.” The houses seem to have been tumbled on to the giant steps as if they had been emptied out of a child’s toy-box only that they have all fallen with the roofs uppermost. There results a confusing irregularity that would turn the brain of a town planner.



ROQUEBRUNE, FROM NEAR BON VOYAGE.



## The City of Peter Pan

Roquebrune has been piled up rather than built. The front doorstep of one house may be just above the roof of the house below, with only a lane to separate them; while two houses, standing side by side may find themselves so strangely assorted that the kitchen and stables of the one will be in a line with the bedrooms of the other.

The houses are old. They form a medley of all shapes and sizes, heights and widths. They conform to no pattern or type. They can hardly be said to have been designed. The majority are of stone. Some few are of plaster and these are inclined to be gay in colour, to be yellow or pink, to have little balconies and green shutters and garlands painted on the walls.

The streets are delightful, because they are so mysterious and have so many unexpected turns and twists, so many odd corners and so many quaint nooks. In places they dip under houses or enter into cool, vaulted ways, where there is an abiding twilight. There are intense contrasts of light and shade in the by-ways of Roquebrune, floods of brilliant sunshine on the cobble stones and the walls alternating with masses of black shadow, each separated from the other by lines as sharp as those that mark the divisions of a chess-board. There are suspicious-looking doors of battered and decaying wood, stone archways, cheery entries in the wall that open into homely sitting-rooms as well as trap-like holes that lead into mouldy vaults.

One small street, the Rue Pié, appears to have lost all control over itself, for it dives insanely under another street—houses, road and all—and then rushes down hill in the dark to apparent destruction. There is one lane

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

that is especially picturesque. It is a secretive kind of way, bearing the romance-suggesting name of the Rue Mongollet. It is very steep, as it needs must be. It is dim, for it passes under buildings, like a heading in a mine. It winds about just as the alley in a story ought to wind and finally bursts out into the light in an unexpected place. It is to some extent cut through rock, so that in places it is hard to tell which is house and which is rock.

There is a piazza in Roquebrune, a real public square, a *place*, with the name of the Place des Frères. It lies at the edge of the cliff where it is protected by a parapet from which stretches a superb view of the green slope to the road and, beyond the road, of Cap Martin and the sea. It is a peculiar square, for on two sides there are only bald precipices. In one corner are a café and a fountain, while on the third side is a school. The piazza is, no doubt, used for occasions of ceremony, for speech making and receptions by the mayor; but on all but high days and holidays it is a playground for a crowd of busy children.

The church is placed near a point where the sea-path makes its entry into Roquebrune. It is comparatively modern and of no special interest. On the wall of a house near by is a stone on which is carved a monogram of Christ with a "torsade" or twisted border. This is said to be a relic of an ancient church which stood upon the site of the existing building.

There is, however, a delightful and unexpected feature about the present church. A door opens suddenly from the sombre aisle into the sunshine of a wondrous garden—wondrous but very small. The garden skirts the rim



## The City of Peter Pan

of the rock upon which the church stands. It is a more fitting adjunct to the church than any pillared cloister or monastic court could be. It is a simple, affectionate little place and is always spoken of by those who come upon it as "the dear little garden." There are many roses in it, a palm tree or two and beds bright with iris and hyacinth, narcissus and candytuft and with just such contented flowers as are found about an old thatched cottage. There is a well in the garden and a shady bench with a far view over the Mediterranean. Old houses and the church make a background; while many birds fill the place with their singing. In this retreat will often be found the curé of Roquebrune. He is as picturesque as his garden, as simple and as charming.

On the crown of Roquebrune stands the old castle of the Lascaris. It still commands and dominates the town, as it has done for long centuries in the past. It is disposed of by Baedeker in the following words "adm. 25c.; fine view." It is a good example of a mediæval fortress and is much less ruinous than are so many of its time. It is placed on the bare rock which forms the top of the town and is surrounded by great walls. It is a veritable strong place, with a fine square tower, tall, massive and imposing. It is covered on one side with ivy and has thus lost much of its ancient grimness, while about its feet cluster, in a curious medley, the red, grey and brown roofs of the faithful town.

Within the keep are a great hall, many vaulted rooms and a vaulted stair which leads to the summit of the castle. Those with an active imagination will find among the ruins the guard-room, the justice chamber, the ladies' quarters and the dungeons, but the lines which indicate

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

such places have become exceedingly faint. Certain trumpery "restorations" have been carried out in this lordly old ruin which would discredit even a suburban tea-garden. The only apology that could be offered for them is that they would not deceive a child of five.

It is impossible to regard Roquebrune seriously or to think of it as an old frontier stronghold that has had a place in history. Roquebrune, as a town, belongs to the country of the story book. It is a town for boys and girls to play in. It is just the town they love to read about and dream about and to make the scene of the doings of their heroes and heroines and their other queer people. From a modern point of view this happy little town is quite ridiculous. It is full of funny places, of whimsical streets and of those odd houses that children draw on slates when one of them has made the rapturous suggestion—"let us draw a street." It has an odd well too—a real well with real water—but it is bewitched and haunted by real witches. At least the people about are so convinced they are real that they are afraid to come to the well for water. Now a well of this kind is never met with in an ordinary town.

There are walled places in Roquebrune where oranges and lemons are growing side by side and where both lavender and rosemary are blooming. The garden of the church is a child's garden, for the paths are narrow and roundabout and the flowers are children's flowers such as are found on nursery tables, while the whole place bears that pleasant form of untidiness which is only to be found where children are the gardeners. There is in the town—as everybody knows—a Place des Frères and with little doubt there is also, somewhere on the

## The City of Peter Pan

rock, a Place des Sœurs which is prettier and which only a favoured few would know about or could find their way to.

Nothing that happens in any story book would seem out of place in Roquebrune. Indeed one is surprised in wandering through its curious ways to find it occupied by ordinary people, men with bowler hats and women who are obviously not princesses. One expects to come upon blind pedlars, old women in scarlet capes and pointed hats, mendicants who are really of royal blood, hags—especially hags with sticks—ladies wrapped in cloaks which just fail to conceal their golden hair, servants carrying heavy boxes with great secrecy and mariners from excessively foreign parts.

There is a steep, cobble-paved lane in Roquebrune up which Jack and Jill must assuredly have climbed when they went to fetch the pail of water which led to the regrettable accident. Indeed it is hardly possible for a child, burdened with a bucket, not to tumble down in Roquebrune. By the parapet in the Place des Frères there is a stone upon which Little Boy Blue must have stood when he blew his horn; for no place could be conceived more appropriate for that exercise. There are walls too without number, walls both high and low, some bare, some green with ferns, which would satisfy the passion for sitting upon walls of a hundred Humpty Dumpties.

The town itself is—I feel assured—the kind of town that Jack reached when he climbed to the top of the Beanstalk, for the entrance to Roquebrune is precisely the sort of entrance one would expect a beanstalk to lead to. In one kitchen full of brown shadows, in a side

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

street near the Rue Pié, is an ancient cupboard in which, almost without question, Old Mother Hubbard kept that hypothetical bone which caused the poor dog such unnecessary distress of mind; while in a wicker cage in the window of a child's bedroom was the Blue Bird, singing as only that bird can sing.

As there are still wolves in the woods about Roquebrune and as red hoods are still fashionable in the Place des Frères it is practically certain that Little Red Riding Hood lived here since it is difficult to imagine a town that would have suited her better. As for Jack the Giant Killer it is beyond dispute that he came to Roquebrune, for the very castle he approached is still standing, the very gate is there from which he hurled defiance to the giant as well as the very stair he ascended. Moreover there is a room or hall in the castle—or at least the remains of it—which obviously no one but a giant could have occupied.

As time goes on archæologists will certainly prove, after due research, that Roquebrune is the City of Peter Pan. There is no town he would love so well; none so adapted to his particular tastes and habits, nor so convenient for the display of those domestic virtues which Wendy possessed. No one should grow up in this queer city, just as no place in a nursery tale should grow old.

Peter Pan is not adapted to the cold, drear climate of England. He stands, as a figure in bronze, in Kensington Gardens with perhaps snow on his curly head or with rain dripping from the edge of his scanty shirt. He should be always in the sun, within sight of a sea which is ever blue and among hills which are deep in green. He could stride down a street in Roquebrune



ROQUEBRUNE: THE EAST GATE.



ROQUEBRUNE: THE PLACE DES FRÈRES.



## The City of Peter Pan

clad—as the sculptor shows him—only in his shirt without exciting more than a pleasant nod, but in the Bayswater Road he would attract attention. He is out of place in a London park in a waste of tired grass dotted with iron chairs which are let out at a penny apiece. Those delightful little people and those inquisitive animals who are peeping out of the crevices in the bronze rock upon which he stands would flourish in this sunny hill town, for there are rocks in the very streets among which they could make their homes.

Then again Captain Hook would enjoy Roquebrune. It is so full of really horrible places and there are so many half-hidden windows out of which he could scream to the terror of honest folk. The pirates too would be more comfortable in this irregular city, for it is near the sea and close to that kind of cave without which no pirate is ever quite at ease. Moreover the Serpentine affords but limited scope to those whose hearts are really devoted to the pursuit of piracy and buccaneering.

So far I do not happen to have met with a pirate of Captain Hook's type within the walls of Roquebrune; but, late one afternoon when the place was lonely I saw a bent man plodding up in the shadows of the Rue Mongollet. He was a sinewy creature with brown, hairy legs. I could not see his face because he bore on his shoulders a large and flabby burden, but I am convinced that he was Sindbad the Sailor, toiling up from the beach and carrying on his back the Old Man of the Sea.

## XXXIII

### THE LEGEND OF ROQUEBRUNE

**T**HE position of Roquebrune high up on the hillside appears—as has already been stated—to be precarious. It seems as if the little city were sliding down towards the sea and would, indeed, make that descent if it were not for an inconsiderable ledge that stands in its way. It can scarcely be a matter of surprise, therefore, that there is a legend to the effect that Roquebrune once stood much higher up the hill, that the side of the mountain broke away, laying bare the cliff and carrying the town down with it to its present site, where the opportune ledge stayed its further movement.

Like other legendary landslips this convulsion of nature is said to have taken place at night and to have been conducted with such delicacy and precision that the inhabitants were unaware of the “move.” They were not even awakened from sleep : no stool was overturned : no door swung open : the mug of wine left overnight by the drowsy reveller stood unspilled on the table : no neurotic dog burst into barking, nor did a cock crow, as is the custom of that bird when untoward events are in progress. Next morning the early riser, strolling into the street with a yawn, found that his native town had made quite a journey downhill towards the sea and had



## The Legend of Roquebrune

merely left behind it a wide scar in the earth which would make a most convenient site for a garden. Unhappily landslips are no longer carried out with this considerate decorum, so the gratitude of Roquebrune should endure for ever.

This is one legend; but there is another which is a little more stirring and which has besides a certain botanical interest. At a period which would be more clearly defined as "once upon a time" the folk of Roquebrune were startled by a sudden horrible rumbling in the ground beneath their feet, followed by a fearful and sickly tremor which spread through the astonished town.

Everybody, clad or unclad, young or old, rushed into the street screaming, "An earthquake!" It *was* an earthquake; because every house in the place was trembling like a man with ague, but it was more than an earthquake for the awful fact became evident that Roquebrune was beginning to glide towards the sea.

People tore down the streets to the open square, to the Place des Frères, which stands on the seaward edge of the town. The stampede was hideous, for the street was unsteady and uneven. The very road—the hard, cobbled road—was thrown into moving waves, such as pass along a shaken strip of carpet. To walk was impossible. Some fell headlong down the street; others crawled down on all fours or slid down in the sitting position; but the majority rolled down, either one by one or in clumps, all clinging together.

The noise was fearful. It was a din made up of the cracking of splintered rock, the falling of chimneys, the

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

rattle of windows and doors, the banging to and fro of loose furniture, the crashing of the church bells, mingled with the shouts of men, the prayers of women and the screams of children. A man thrown downstairs and clinging to the heaving floor could hear beneath him the grinding of the foundations of his house against the rock as the building slid on.

The houses rocked from side to side like a labouring ship. As a street heeled over one way the crockery and pots and pans would pour out of the doors like water and rattle down the streets with the slithering knot of prostrate people.

Clouds of dust filled the air, together with fumes of sulphur from the riven cliff. Worst of all was an avalanche of boulders which dropped upon the town like bombs in an air raid.

The people who clung to the crumbling parapet of the Place des Frères saw most ; for they were in a position which would correspond to the front seat of a vehicle. They could feel and see the town (castle, church and all) skidding downhill like some awful machine, out of control and with every shrieking and howling brake jammed on.

They could see the precipice ahead over which they must soon tumble. Probably they did not notice that at the very edge of the cliff, standing quite alone, was a little bush of broom covered with yellow flowers.

The town slid on ; but when the foremost wall reached the bush the bush did not budge. It might have been a boss of brass. It stopped the town as a stone may stop a wagon. The avalanche of rocks ceased and, in a moment, all was peace.

## The Legend of Roquebrune

The inhabitants disentangled themselves, stood up, looked for their hats, dusted their clothes and walked back, with unwonted steadiness, to their respective homes, grumbling, no doubt, at the carelessness of the Town Council.

They showed some lack of gratitude for I notice that a bush of broom has no place on the coat of arms of Roquebrune.

## XXXIV

### SOME MEMORIES OF ROQUEBRUNE

**R**OQUEBRUNE is very old. It can claim a lineage so ancient that the first stirrings of human life among the rocks on which it stands would appear to the historian as a mere speck in the dark hollow of the unknown. Roquebrune has been a town since men left caves and forests and began to live in dwellings made by hands. It can boast that for long years it was—with Monaco and Eze—one of the three chief sea towns along this range of coast. Its history differs in detail only from the history of any old settlement within sight of the northern waters of the Mediterranean.

The Pageant of Roquebrune unfolds itself to the imagination as a picturesque march of men with a broken hillside as a background and a stone stair as a processional way. Foremost in the column that moves across the stage would come the vague figure of the native searching for something to eat; then the shrewd Phœnician would pass searching for something to barter and then the staid soldierly Roman seeking for whatever would advance the glory of his imperial city. They all in turn had lived in Roquebrune.

As the Pageant progressed there would pass by the hectoring Lombard, the swarthy Moor, a restless band of robber barons and pirate chiefs, a medley of mediæval



ROQUEBRUNE, SHOWING THE CASTLE.



## Some Memories of Roquebrune

men-at-arms and a cluster of lords and ladies with their suites. They all in turn had lived in Roquebrune. Finally there would mount the stair the shopkeeper and the artisan of to-day, who would reach the foot of Roquebrune in a tramcar.

This Pageant of Roquebrune would impress the mind with the great antiquity of man, with his ceaseless evolution through the ages with an ever-repeated change in face, in speech, in bearing and in garb. Yet look! Above the housetops of the present town a company of swifts is whirling with a shrill whistle like that of a sword swishing through the air. They, at least, have remained unchanged.

They hovered over the town before the Romans came. They have seen the Saracens, the troopers of Savoy, the Turkish bandits, the soldiers of Napoleon. Age after age, it would seem, they have been the same, the same happy birds, the same circle of wings, the same song in the air.

On the rock too are bushes of rosemary—"Rosemary for remembrance." The little shrub with its blue flower has also seen no change. The caveman knew it when he first wandered over the hill with the curiosity of a child. The centurion picked a bunch of it to put in his helmet. The pirate of six hundred years ago slashed at it with his cutlass as he passed along and the maiden of to-day presses it shyly upon her parting lover.

In the Pageant of Roquebrune man is, indeed, the new-comer, the upstart, the being of to-day, the creature that changes. The swifts, the rosemary and the hillside belong to old Roquebrune.

The following are certain landmarks in the tale of the

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

town.<sup>1</sup> It seems to have belonged at first to the Counts of Ventimiglia, about in the same way that a wallet picked up by the roadside would belong to the finder. In 477 these Counts sold it to a Genoese family of the name of Vento. In 1189 the town is spoken of as Genoese and as being in the holding of the Lascaris. It was indeed for long a stronghold of this house. About 1353 Carlo Grimaldi of Monaco purchased Roquebrune from Guglielmo Lascaris, Count of Ventimiglia, for 6,000 golden florins. The union of Monaco, Roquebrune and Mentone thus accomplished lasted for 500 years with unimportant intervals during which the union was for a moment severed or reduced to a thread. From 1524 to 1641 the little town was under the protection of Spain.

In 1848 Roquebrune, supported by Mentone, rebelled against the Grimaldi, after suffering oppression at their hands for thirty-three years, and declared itself a free town or, rather, a little republic. It so remained until 1860 when it was united with France at the time that Nice was ceded to that country. An indemnity of 4,000,000 francs was paid to the Prince of Monaco in compensation for such of his dominions as changed hands in that year.<sup>2</sup>

Roquebrune, of course, did not escape the disorders which befell other towns in its vicinity. Its position rendered it weak, exposed it to danger and made it difficult to defend. It was sacked on occasion, notably by the Turks about 1543 after they had dealt with Eze in the manner already described (page 127). It met with its

<sup>1</sup> As to the name "*Cabbé Roquebrune*," Dr. Müller says that *cabbé* means a little cape (the Cap Martin).

<sup>2</sup> Durandy, "*Mon pays, etc., de la Riviera*," 1918. Dr. Müller, "*Mentone*," 1910. Boslo, "*La Province des Alpes Maritimes*," 1902.



## Some Memories of Roquebrune

most serious sorrow in 1560 when it was assaulted, set on fire and gravely damaged.

At this date the history of Roquebrune ended or at least changed from that of a fortified place to that of a somewhat humble hill town. So it sank, like Eze, into obscurity. The ruins that remain date from this period and it is upon the wreckage of that year that the present town is founded. The castle would appear to have been restored, for the last time, in 1528 when the work was directed by Augustin Grimaldi of Monaco and bishop of Grasse.

By the manner in which Roquebrune bore the stress of years and faced the troubles of life the little town differed curiously from her two neighbours of Monaco and Eze. Monaco and Eze were distinctly masculine in character. They were men-towns. They were, by natural endowment, very strong. They boasted of their strength and took advantage of it. They fought everybody and every thing. They seemed to encourage assault and indeed to provoke it. If hit they hit back again. Their masculinity got them into frequent trouble. Moreover they loved the sea and were masters of it.

Now Roquebrune was feminine. She was a woman-town. She was constitutionally weak. She was little able to defend herself. When hit she did not hit back again, because she was not strong enough. She was bullied and was powerless to resent it. She was afraid of the sea, as many women are, and cared not to venture on it.

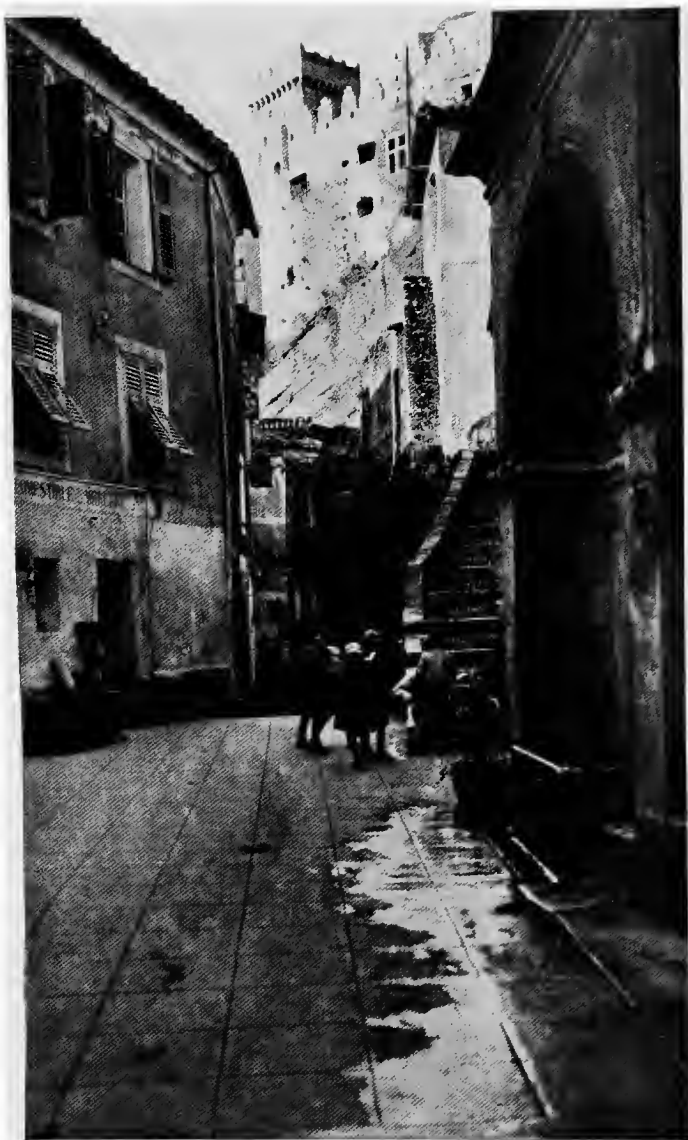
She showed her feminine disposition in more ways than one. Roquebrune had been under the harsh tyranny of Monaco for a number of years, but she endured her ill

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

treatment in silence. She bent her back to the blow. She crouched on the ground, passive and apparently cowed. Women will endure oppression patiently and without murmuring for a very long time. But a moment comes when they revolt, and it is noteworthy that they revolt generally with success, for the issue depends not only upon a masterly patience, but upon the choice of the proper time to end it. A town of the type of Eze would have had neither the patience to wait nor the instinct to select the moment for an uprising. Eze, after a year or so of hardship, would have flown at the throat of Monaco and would probably have been annihilated in the venture.

Roquebrune waited a great deal more than a year or so. She waited and endured for thirty-three years and when instinct told her that the right time had come she turned upon the enemy, but not with a battleaxe in her hand. She quietly placed herself under the protection of Italy and when she had secured that support she boldly declared herself a free city and a free city she remained until she was received into the open arms of France.

An episode that happened in 1184 will, perhaps, still better illustrate the feminine character of Roquebrune. In that year the town was besieged by the Ventimiglians. The reason for the assault is not explained by the historian. It is probable that mere want of something to do led to this act of wickedness. One can imagine the Count of Ventimiglia bored to the verge of melancholia by idleness and can conceive him as becoming tiresome and unmanageable. One morning, perhaps, a courtier would address his yawning lord with the remark, "What! nothing to do, sir! Why not go and sack Roquebrune?" To which



ROQUEBRUNE: RUE DE LA FONTAINE.  
View of Castle.



## Some Memories of Roquebrune

the count, quite cheered, would reply, "An excellent idea. Send for the captain."

Anyhow, whatever the reason, the count and his men, all in good spirits, appeared before the walls of the town and prepared for an assault. Now the state of affairs was as follows. Roquebrune, owing to its position, could not withstand a siege. Its fall was inevitable and merely a question of time. The governor would, however, be compelled to defend the town to the very last. He would man the walls and barricade the gates and, calling his company together in the Place des Frères would remind them of their duty, would tell them, with uplifted sword, that Roquebrune must be defended so long as a wall remained; that the enemy must not enter the town except over their dead bodies and that, in the defence of their homes, they must be prepared to die like heroes.

Now things seemed rather different to the governor's wife. She was a shrewd and practical woman not given to heroics. She knew that Roquebrune could not withstand a siege and must assuredly be taken. She probably heard the stirring address in the square and did not at all like her husband's talk about dying to a man and about people walking over dead bodies and especially over his body. She knew that the more determined the resistance the more terrible would be the revenge when the town was taken. She did not like people being killed, especially her nice people of Roquebrune. Besides, as she paced to and fro, a couple of children were tugging at her dress and asking her why she would not take them out on the hill-side to play as she did every morning.

So when the night came she put a cloak over her head, made her way out of the town, found the enemy's camp

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

and told the count how—by certain arrangements she had made—he could enter the town without the loss of a man.

Before the day dawned the bewildered inhabitants, who had been up all night fussing and hiding away their things, found that the Ventimiglians were in occupation of the town; for, as the historian says, “the besiegers entered the town without striking a blow.”

Thus ended the siege of Roquebrune. It ended in a way that was probably satisfactory to both parties and, indeed, to everyone but the governor who had, without question, a great deal to say to his lady on the subject of minding her own business.

As she patted the head of her smallest child and glanced at the breakfast table she, no doubt, replied that she *had* minded her own business.



THE ROMAN MILESTONES "603."



A PIECE OF THE OLD ROMAN  
ROAD.





## XXXV

### GALLOWS HILL

**T**HE hills that overshadow the coast road between Cap d'Ail and Roquebrune are perhaps as diligently traversed by the winter visitor as any along the Riviera, because in this area level roads are rare and those who would walk far afield must of necessity climb up hill.

The hill-side is of interest on account of the number of pre-historic walled camps which are to be found on its slopes. These camps form a series of strongholds which extends from Cap d'Ail to Roquebrune. There are some seven of these forts within this range. The one furthest to the west is Le Castellar de la Brasca in the St. Laurent valley on the Nice side of Cap d'Ail. Then come L'Abeglio just above the Cap d'Ail church, the Bautucan on the site of the old signal station above the Mid Corniche, the Castellaretto over the Boulevard de l'Observatoire, Le Cros near the mule-path to La Turbie and lastly Mont des Mules and Le Ricard near Roquebrune.

Of these the camp most easily viewed—but by no means the most easy to visit—is that of the Mont des Mules, on the way up to La Turbie. This is a bare hill of rough rocks upon the eastern eminence of which is a camp surrounded by a very massive wall built up of huge

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

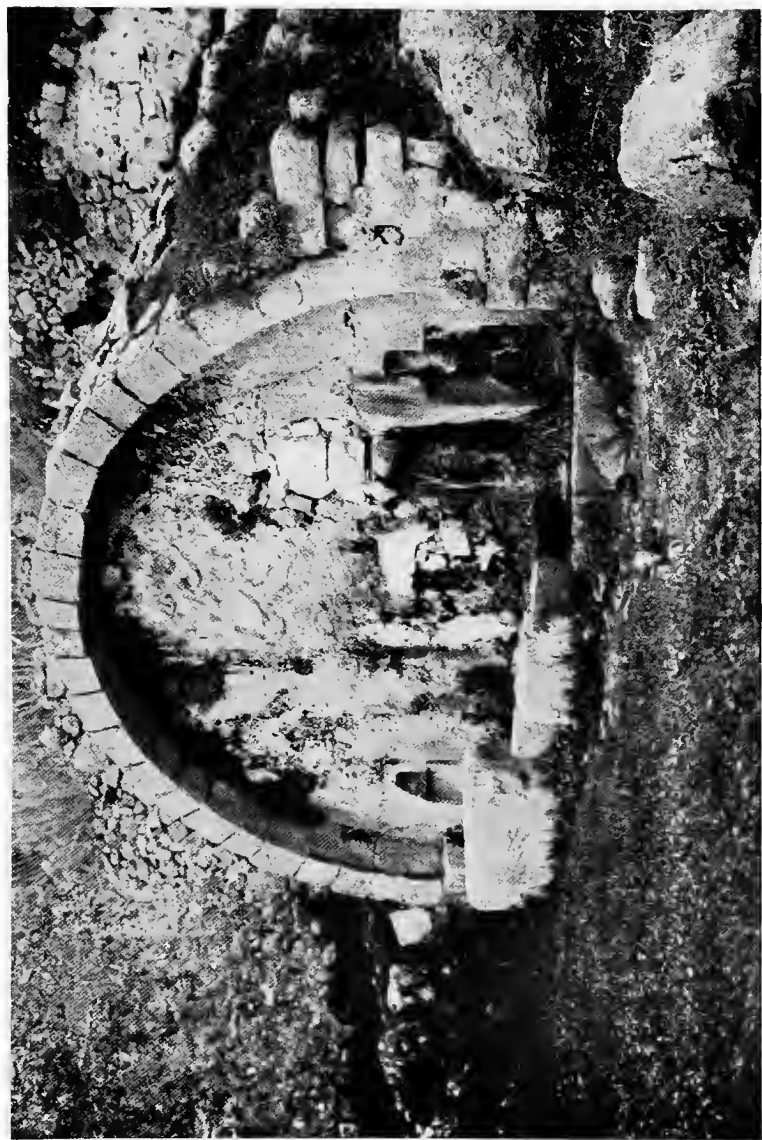
unchiselled stones. It is fitly called a "camp of the giants," for no weaklings ever handled such masses of rock as these. The Romans who first penetrated into the country must have viewed these military works with amazement, for competent writers affirm that they date from about 2,000 years before the birth of Christ.

Along this hill-side also are traces of the old Roman road, fragments which have been but little disturbed and which, perhaps, are still paved with the very stones over which have marched the legions from the Imperial City. To the east of La Turbie and just below La Grande Corniche are two Roman milestones, side by side, in excellent preservation. There are two, because they have been placed in position by two different surveyors.

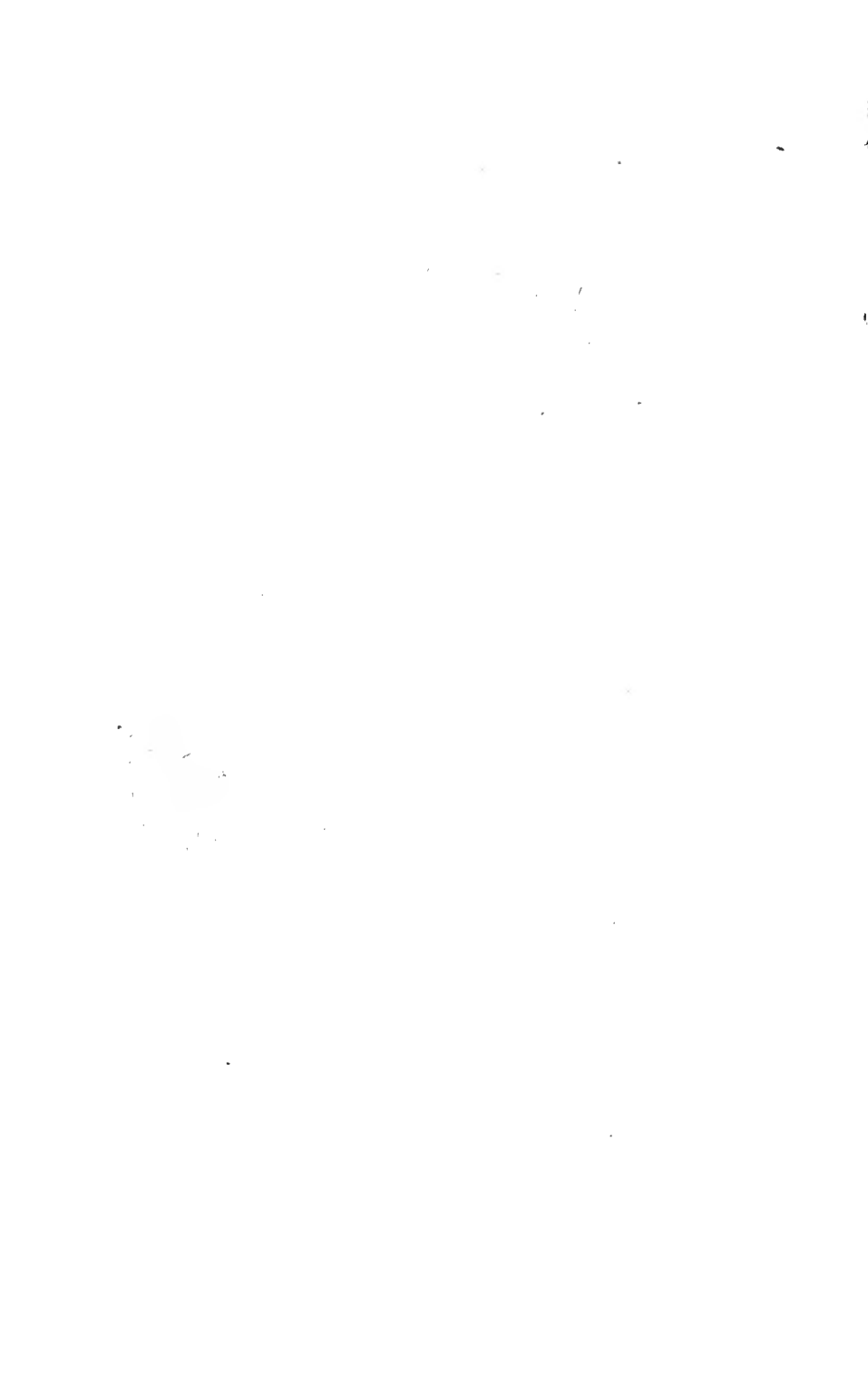
They stand by the ancient way and show clearly enough the mileage—603. The next milestone (604) stood on the Aurelian Way just outside La Turbie, at the point where the road is crossed by the railway, but only the base of it remains. Between it and the previous milestone is a Roman wayside fountain under a rounded arch. It is still used as a water supply by the cottagers and the conduit that leads to it can be traced for some distance up the hill.

The first Roman milestone to the west of La Turbie (No. 605) is on the side of the Roman road as it turns down towards Laghet.<sup>1</sup> This milestone is the finest in the district and is remarkably well preserved. Those who comment on the closeness of these *milliaires* must

<sup>1</sup> The ancient road lies above and to the west of the modern road to the convent.



THE ROMAN FOUNTAIN NEAR LA TURBIE.



## Gallows Hill

remember that the Roman mile was 142 yards shorter than the English.

Above the Mont des Mules is Mont Justicier. It is a hill so bleak and so desolate that it is little more than a wind-swept pile of stones. It has been used for centuries as a quarry and much of the material employed in the building of the Roman trophy at La Turbie came from its barren sides. Its dreariness is rendered more dismal by its history and by the memories that cloud its past. These memories do not recall a busy throng of quarrymen who roared out chanties as they worked at their cranes and whose chatter could be heard above the thud of the pick and the clink of the chisel. They recall the time when this dread mound was the Hill of Death and a terror in the land.

On the summit of Mont Justicier is a tall, solitary column. It appears, at a distance, to be a shaft of marble; but it is made up of small pieces of white stone cemented together. It is a large column nearly three feet in diameter and some fifteen feet in height. Near it is the base of a second column of identical proportions to the first. The distance between the two pillars is twelve feet and they stand on a platform which faces southwards across the sea. These columns were the posts of a gigantic gallows. Their summits were connected by a cross beam and from that beam at least six ropes could dangle. This is why the mound is named Mont Justicier, or, as it would be called in England, Gallows Hill.

The Mount became a place of execution in the Middle Ages and towards the end of the seventeenth century there would never be a time when bodies could

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

not be seen swinging from the beam of the great gallows, since it was here that the brigands known as the Barbets were hanged.

The term "Barbet" has a somewhat curious history. It was originally a nickname given by the Catholics to the Protestant Vaudois and later to the Protestants of the Cevennes and elsewhere. The name had origin in the circumstance that the Vaudois called their ministers "*barbes*" or "uncles," in somewhat the same way that the Catholics call their priests "fathers."

The term was later applied to Protestant heretics generally and notably to the Albigensians who held to the mountains of Piedmont and Dauphiné. They refused baptism, the Mass, the adoration of the Cross, the traffic in indulgences. "What was originally a logical revolt of pure reason against dogmatic authority soon took unfortunately varying forms, and then reached unpardonable extremes."<sup>1</sup> These men were outlawed, were hunted down and massacred and treated as rogues and vagabonds of a pernicious type. For their ill name they were themselves not a little to blame. They kept to the mountains from which great efforts were made to dislodge them about the end of the seventeenth century.

The term Barbets was subsequently given to the inhabitants of the valleys of the Alps who lived by plunder and contraband and finally to any brigands or robbers who had their lairs among the mountains. "In the year 1792," writes Rosio,<sup>2</sup> "irregular bands were formed, under the name of Barbets, which were trained and com-

<sup>1</sup> "Old Provence," by T. A. Cook, Vol. 2, p. 169.

<sup>2</sup> "Les Alpes Maritimes," 1902.



**GALLOWS HILL.**



**MONT JUSTICIER : THE TWO PILLARS OF THE GALLOWS.**





## Gallows Hill

manded by military officers devoted to Sardinia. These bands of men harassed the French army, pillaged the camps and held up convoys. When the House of Savoy lost its hold on the Continent the Barbets divided into smaller companies and gave themselves up to open brigandage. Their habitat was in the mountains of Levens, of L'Escarene, Eze and La Turbie. Near Levens the unfortunates who fell into their hands were hurled into the Vesubie from a rock 300 metres high which is still called *Le Saut des Français*."

At the foot of Mont Justicier, near to the gallows and by the side of the actual Roman road, is the little chapel of St. Roch. It is a very ancient chapel and its years weigh heavily upon it, for it has nearly come to the end of its days. It is built of rough stones beneath a coating of plaster and has a cove roof covered with red tiles. The base of the altar still stands, traces of frescoes can be seen on the walls and on one side of the altar is an ambry or small, square wall-press. It was in this sorrowful little chapel that criminals about to be executed made confession and received the last offices of the Church.

A sadder place than this in which to die could hardly be realised. The land around is so harsh, the hill so heartless, the spot so lonely. And yet many troubled souls have here bid farewell to life and have started hence on their flight into the unknown. Before the eyes of the dying men would stretch the everlasting sea. On the West—where the day comes to an end—the world is shut out by the vast bastion of the *Tête de Chien*; but on the East, as far as the eye can reach, all is open and welcoming and full of pity. It is to the East that the

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

closing eyes would turn, to the East where the dawn would break and where would glow, in kindly tints of rose and gold, the promise of another day.

There is one lonely tree on this Hill of Death—a shivering pine; while, as if to show the kindness of little things, some daisies and a bush of wild thyme have taken up their place at the foot of the gallows.



THE CHAPEL OF ST. ROCH.



## XXXVI

### MENTONE

**M**ENTONE is a popular and quite modern resort on the Riviera much frequented by the English on account of its admirable climate. Placed on the edge of the Italian frontier it is the last Mediterranean town in France. It lies between the sea and a semicircle of green hills upon a wide flat which is traversed by four rough torrents. It is, on the whole, a pleasant looking place although it is not so brilliant in colour as the posters in railway stations would make it. It is seen at its best from a distance, for then its many dull streets, its prosaic boulevards and its tramlines are hidden by bright villas and luxuriant gardens, by ruddy roofs and comfortable trees. Standing up in its midst is the old town which gives to it a faint suggestion of some antiquity.

This old town, together with the port, divides Mentone into two parts—the West and the East Bays. The inhabitants also are divided into two sections—the West-bayers and the Eastbayers, and these two can never agree as to which side of the town is the more agreeable. They have fought over this question ever since houses have appeared in the two disputed districts and they are fighting on the matter still. The Westbayer wonders that the residents on the East can find any delight in living,

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

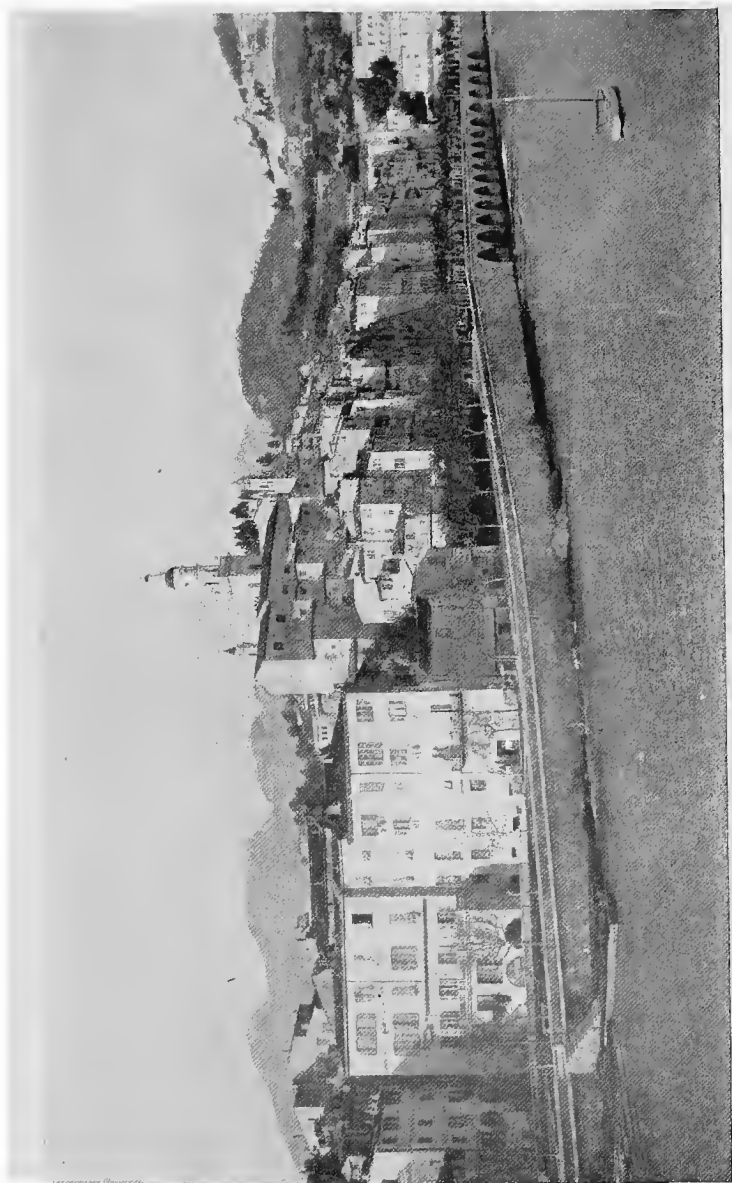
while the Eastbayer is surprised that his acquaintance in the other bay is still unnumbered with the dead. I had formed the opinion that the Western Bay was the more pleasant and the more healthy but Augustus Hare crushes me to the ground for he writes, "English doctors—seldom acquainted with the place—are apt to recommend the Western Bay as more bracing; but it is exposed to mistral and dust, and its shabby suburbs have none of the beauty of the Eastern Bay." So I stand corrected, but hold to my opinion still.

Hare is a little hard on Mentone by reason of its being so painfully modern. "Up to 1860," he says, "it was a picturesque fishing town, with a few scattered villas let to strangers in the neighbouring olive groves, and all its surroundings were most beautiful and attractive; now much of its two lovely bays is filled with hideous and stuccoed villas in the worst taste. The curious old walls are destroyed, and pretentious paved promenades have taken the place of the beautiful walks under tamarisk groves by the sea-shore. Artistically, Mentone is vulgarised and ruined, but its dry, sunny climate is delicious, its flowers exquisite and its excursions—for good walkers—are inexhaustible and full of interest."<sup>1</sup>

There can be few who will not admit that the modern town of Mentone is commonplace and rather characterless, but, at the same time, it must be insisted that a large proportion of the Mentone villas are—from every point of view—charming and free from the charge of being vulgar.

Some indeed, with their glorious gardens, are serenely beautiful. With one observation by Mr. Hare

<sup>1</sup> "The Rivas," London, 1897, p. 82.



MENTONE: THE OLD TOWN.





## Mentone

every visitor will agree—that in which he speaks of the country with which Mentone is surrounded. It is magnificent and so full of interest and variety that it can claim, I think, to have no parallel in any part of the French Riviera.

Mentone is a quiet place that appears to take its pleasure demurely, if not sadly. It is marked too by a respectability which is commendable, but at the same time almost awe-inspiring. Perhaps its nearness to Monte Carlo makes this characteristic more prominent. If Monte Carlo be a town of scarlet silks, short skirts and high-heeled shoes Mentone is a town of alpaca and cotton gloves and of skirts so long that they almost hide the elastic-side boots.

There is a class of English lady—elderly, dour and unattached—that is comprised under the not unkindly term of “aunt.” They are propriety personified. They are spoken of as “worthy.” Although not personally attractive they are eminent by reason of their intimate knowledge of the economics of life abroad. To them those human mysteries, the keeper of the *pension*, the petty trader and the laundress are as an open book. They fill the frivolous bachelor with reverential alarm, but their acquaintance with the rate of exchange, the price of butter and the cheap shop is supreme in its intricacy. These “aunts” are to be found in larger numbers in Mentone than in any other resort of the English in France.

The old town of Mentone is small and circumscribed. It stands in the centre of the place as a low hillock or promontory. In relation to the rest of Mentone it is like the brown body of a butterfly whose gaudy wings are

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

spread over the West Bay on the one side and the East Bay on the other.

The history of Mentone is meagre and of little interest. Compared with neighbouring towns it is of no great antiquity. The Romans passed by the site on which it stands without a halt. The Lombards and the Saracens left the spot alone for it offered no attractions to the neediest robber. According to Dr. Müller, whose work on Mentone is above praise, there is no mention of the town in the old chronicles until the commencement of the thirteenth century. It was a small place but poorly fortified and therefore little able to protect itself. It became in consequence the victim of any tyrant in the country round and its experience of tyranny must have been long-enduring and acute.

It seems to have belonged first to Ventimiglia and then to have been the property of the Vento family of Genoa. Later it came under the rule of the Counts of Provence and in 1346 was purchased by Carlo Grimaldi of Monaco for sixteen thousand gold florins. It remained a part of the principality of Monaco for some hundreds of years. It was but slightly disturbed by the wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, because it was so little worth fighting about. In 1848 the whole population of Mentone, under the leadership of the Chevalier Trenca, rose against the oppression of the Grimaldi and the town became, with Roquebrune, a republic. Finally it was sold by Monaco to France in 1861 for the sum of four million francs and there its story ends.

The best general view of Mentone is to be obtained from the pier. Between the East Bay and the West



MENTONE: THE EAST BAY



## Mentone

stands the old town, a heap of drab houses and red roofs, piled up in the form of a mound on the summit of which are St. Michael's Church and the plume-like cypresses of the old cemetery. Behind this drab town are two green hills, round and low—St. Vincent and Les Chappes; and beyond again—shutting out the world—are the ash-grey slopes of the Maritime Alps. To the west is the *massif* of Mont Agel and the crag of St. Agnes; while to the east is the towering height of the Berceau.

The old town is small, but it has the merit—rare in these parts—of being clean and free from “the evil smell” of which Mr. Hare has complained. It is Italian in character and, owing to its place on a hill, is made up of steep lanes and many stairs, of headlong passages and vaulted ways. The numerous arches that cross the streets are the outcome of an experience of earthquakes painfully acquired in years gone by. At the foot of the town is the Place du Cap out of which certain undecided old lanes ramble to the sea, with the rolling gait of unsteady mariners. Among these the Ruelle Giapetta and the Rue du Bastion are notable by their picturesqueness.

The way up to the old town is by the steps of the Rue des Logettes. The first street encountered is the Rue de Bréa. It is a mean street, but it is occupied by houses which have been, at one time, among the most pretentious in Mentone. At No. 3 Napoleon lodged during the Italian campaign. It is a large building of four stories with a fine doorway in white stone. It is now given up to poor tenants who hang their washing out of the windows. At No. 2, a private

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

house in comfortable state, General Bréa was born in 1790. He was one of Napoleon's generals, was at Leipzig and Waterloo and was assassinated in Paris on June 24th, 1848. On the wall of a garden in the Rue Bréa is a marble tablet to commemorate the visit of Pius VII in 1814. The Pope was returning to Rome after his long exile in France and it was from the terrace of this garden that he blessed the people crowding in the street. While dealing with famous people it may be noted that in the Rue St. Michel (No. 19) is the house in which the Chevalier Carlo Trenca was born, the president of the short-lived Republic of Mentone.

The most important and most interesting street of old Mentone is the Rue Longue. It runs athwart the east side of the hill, mounting very easily to the St. Julien Gate which is just below the old cemetery. The street is paved, is some twelve feet in width and is entered from the Logettes by a dim passage. The street is a little dark, because the houses on both sides of it are tall. This Rue Longue follows the route of the old Roman road. Until 1810 it was the only carriageable street between the East and the West Bays and the only coast road between Italy and Provence.

It was the Park Lane of Mentone, the fashionable street in which were the palaces of the nobles and the houses of the rich. The humbler dweller in Mentone would hardly dare put foot in it, because it was so grand and so exclusive. Here "before the great Revolution, the ladies of Mentone used to sit out and work in the open air, just as the peasants do now, before the doors of the houses or (one is expected to say) palaces. A letter of the last century describes the

## Mentone

animated appearance which this gave to the place in those days, the gentlemen stopping to chat with each group as they passed . . . while the nights were enlivened by frequent serenades, which were given under the windows of pretty girls by their admirers.”<sup>1</sup>

This picture is very difficult to realise for the Rue Longue is now a humble street that the fastidious would probably call a slum. There are one or two little shops in it, but the houses are, for the most part turned into tenements for a very densely packed population. The buildings are of stone covered unhappily with plaster; but they nearly all show traces of an exalted past. There are many fine entries of stone with either a pointed or a rounded arch and a few windows which recall better days. The typical house has an arched doorway from which ascends a stone stair whose summit is lost in darkness. It leads obviously to the door of the dwelling, the ground floor being devoted, in old days, to stables or offices. There is in the Rue Longue a shop of the mediæval type, such as has been described in the account of St. Paul du Var (page 101). Over the portal of one house is the date 1542 and over another that of 1543. The house No. 123 was the palace of the princes of Monaco. It bears the initials of Honorius II and the date 1650. Within is a fine stone stair with a vaulted ceiling. Among the more picturesque streets of the town may be mentioned the Rue du Vieux Château, the Rue de la Côte and the Rue Lampedouze.

The Rue Longue ends at the main gate of the town—the Porte St. Julien. The gate itself has been

<sup>1</sup> “A Winter at Mentone.”

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

modernised and is represented only by an archway of a quite unassuming type. Leading up from this portal to the old cemetery is a wall in which are traces of the *enceinte* of the old fortress. The stronghold, built (Dr. Müller states) between 1492 and 1505, occupied the summit of the hill on which the old cemetery now stands. Here can be seen portions of the castle wall which have become incorporated with the structure of this strangely placed burial ground.

A flight of steps from the Rue Longue leads to St. Michael's Church. The original church was built in 1619, but was almost entirely destroyed by the great earthquake of 1887, after which date the present church was constructed. It is an ambitious building in an indefinite "classic" style and presents no features of interest. The same may be said of the two other churches in the old town—those of the Pénitents Blancs and of the Pénitents Noirs.

The gallant old fort that, in the seventeenth century, guarded Mentone on the side of the sea has been almost engulfed in the building of the new pier. It is now merely a grey, patched-up ruin, standing on the rocks by the water's edge and ignominiously held up behind by the officious pier. Its little barred windows are curious, while on its summit can still be seen some traces of its sentry towers.





MENTONE : RUE LONGUE.



## XXXVII

### THE FIRST VISITORS TO THE RIVIERA

**T**HERE is great fascination about a very ancient human dwelling-place. It stands out among the blank shadows of the past as a warm reality, a lingering spark still aglow among the ashes of things that once had been. There is about it the charm of a memory that is partly real and partly only dreamed about. Strange as the venerable place may be it comes quite naturally into the story of our common ancestry. It seems, in some indefinite way, to be a family possession which we can regard with a personal interest and a legitimate curiosity. Amidst the changes and upheavals of everyday life there is about the old house a comfortable assurance of the continuity of human existence and of our individual claim upon those who have trod before us the great highway.

Such an ancient abode of men is to be found at Mentone, at a spot called, in the local speech, the Baoussé-Roussé. The English would term the place the Red Cliff. The Red Cliff is just beyond the tragical looking chasm, with its babyish stream, that marks the frontier of France. It stands, therefore, in Italy. It is a formidable cliff of great height, as erect as a wall, as defiant as a Titanic bastion. It rises sheer from the rugged beach and is as old as the sea. It has been

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

scraped smooth by the wind of a million years, and may have been once scoured clean by the rain of Noah's deluge. It is bare of vegetation, except that, here and there, a pitying weed, lavish with yellow blossoms, clings tenderly to its scarred surface. About its foot are a few palms, a tall aloe, and some bushes with scarlet flowers. The colour of the cliff is a tawny grey, stained with red of the tint of ancient rust. There are long seams, too, on its surface which suggest the wrinkles of extreme old age.

At the bottom of the precipice are certain caverns which were once the abodes of men. These caves are about nine in number; so that at one time the Red Cliff must have been quite a little town, for the caverns are capacious. The entrances to the caves are, for the most part, in the form of huge clefts in the rock from twenty feet to sixty feet high. They face towards the south, so that at noon a streak of light can penetrate into the vast stone hall and illumine its floor. When the sun has passed each portal becomes no more than a black gap in the precipice, very mysterious to look upon.

The people who inhabited these caves belong to our earliest known ancestors. They stand at the root of the family tree. They represent the Adam and Eve of human history. Behind these people stretches the void of the unknown. It is in their likeness that the first human being steps out of the everlasting darkness into the light of the present world.

They are known as the Palæolithic folk—the cavern people, the men and women of the rough Stone Age. Their finest implements and most cunning weapons were



MENTONE : A DOORWAY IN THE RUE LONGUE.



## The First Visitors to the Riviera

of unpolished flint. They had a knowledge of fire. These two possessions express the meagre progress they had made in the march of civilisation.

There are certain skeletons of these cliff-folk in the Museum at Monaco. It is a memorable moment when one first has sight of men who were alive some 50,000 years ago, and who, after interminable centuries, have just come again into the light of day and the company of their kind. It is at least—in the records of the human family—a curious meeting, a meeting rendered almost dramatic when one sees a dainty French lady in the mode of 1920 peering through a glass case into the face of an ancestor who walked the shores of France in an age so remote as to be almost mythical.

There is an impression with some that these people of long ago were brutish creatures, ape-like and uncouth, being little more, in fact, than gorillas with a leaven of human craft. The Red Cliff skeletons, however, are not the skeletons of brutes. They show, on the contrary, the characteristic features of the bones of the man and woman of modern times. Such differences as exist are slight. There are the same straight back, the broad shoulders, the well-balanced head, the finely proportioned limbs, the delicate feet and hands. This skeleton of a Red Cliff man might have been that of a modern athlete, but with a muscular development that the modern would envy; while this shapely woman, from the depths of a cave, might have graced in life the enclosure at Ascot. There are some peculiarities in the shinbone, but I doubt if they would be noticeable even through a silk stocking. The skull is different, the face is flat, the nose broad, the forehead low, the jaws

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

prominent. From the Ascot standpoint it must be allowed that the cave folk had ugly faces, coarse and unintellectual no doubt, but not the aspect of the gorilla.

Among the skeletons from the colony at Mentone is one of especial interest. It is that of an old woman whose body was found in the deepest part of the cavern, and who, therefore, may be assumed to have belonged to the earliest or most ancient of the inhabitants. She is perfectly and, indeed; finely formed. Her age would be about seventy. It is to be noted incidentally that the bones show no evidences of gross rheumatic changes nor of other disabling trouble. That an old lady could live for seventy years in a damp cave, in a chilly climate, and escape such inconveniences is a sign of her time and of ours.

It is not known at what age Eve died, but if she reached the term of three score years and ten these perfect and undisturbed bones may be imagined to be those of the Mother of Men. Eve is generally depicted by the sculptor as an elegant lady with a noble Greek face, in which is realised the extreme of refinement. It would probably be more exact if our first mother were shown in the form of a stalwart woman with the countenance of the Australian aborigines or of a Hottentot.

The lady of Mentone has around her forearm two bracelets. They are made of sea shells and are just such as an ingenious child might make while sitting on the beach in an idle summer. One might suppose that the wearer was proud of them, and it may be that vanity in woman and love of dress—or, at least, of





A SIDE STREET IN MENTONE.



## The First Visitors to the Riviera

jewellery—are born with her. If this be so, it is a pity that the wearer of the bracelets could not have known, in her lifetime, that her cherished ornaments would still be on her arm and would still be gazed upon by men 50,000 years after she had ceased to be.

It is a matter of interest and indeed of present envy to note how perfect are the teeth of these early folk, how strong they are, how solidly they are ground down. They must have gnawed the bones of the mammoth, of the cave bear, and of the woolly rhinoceros, for the remains of such animals are abundant in the dust heaps of these caverns. The standard of comfort in the commune of Red Cliff was low, for it has to be recognised that not only did whole families occupy one apartment, but in that apartment they cooked their food, deposited their refuse, and buried their dead.

In looking at these very venerable ancestors it is the face that naturally attracts the greater attention. There is some expression in a skull, an expression of melancholy and surprise, with a suggestion of ferocity. Conspicuous, especially, is the look of wonder, the open mouth, the staring teeth, the solemn, hollow eye sockets. What images must have been formed within those sunken orbits! Upon what a world must the vanished eyes once have gazed, upon what strange beasts, upon what fantastic glades and woods!

When the Red Cliff was inhabited the sea was probably at some distance. From the entry to the cave one would have looked, at one age, over a luxurious sub-tropical country, glaring with heat, and at another era over a land chilled with ice and deep in snow. During the lifetime of the old lady of the bracelets the climate

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

is assumed to have been cold and damp, the climate, indeed, of England at its worst. There must be, therefore, a bond of sympathy between the aged dame and the present day migrant, who has fled to the Riviera to escape a British winter.

The dwelling places of these very early Riviera visitors are still practically unchanged. We enter by the same portal as they did; we tread the floor they trod, and, looking up, we see the very roof of rock that sheltered them and that they knew so well.

The great cave—the Barma-Grande—has a fine entry, sixty-five feet in height and some thirteen feet in breadth. The cave is still deep, although its length has been curtailed by the callous quarryman, who has cut away much of the outer face of the cliff to find stone for villas, railway bridges, and motor garages. The cave narrows down to a smooth-sided cleft a few feet wide. This must have been a favourite spot, a cosy corner, an easy lounge after a day's hunting.

The sun passes over the cavern wall as over the face of a dial, moving inch by inch just as it has moved, day by day, for unknown thousands of years. The creeping light serves to record on the rock the passing of time. The cave-wife, busy with flint scraper and unwieldy lumps of mammoth flesh, would note, perhaps with concern, that the sun had already reached a certain grey boss on the wall which told that the height of the day was near and yet that the daily meal was not ready. The sun still falls on the same spot on the wall at the same moment of time, for neither the sun nor the cave has changed.

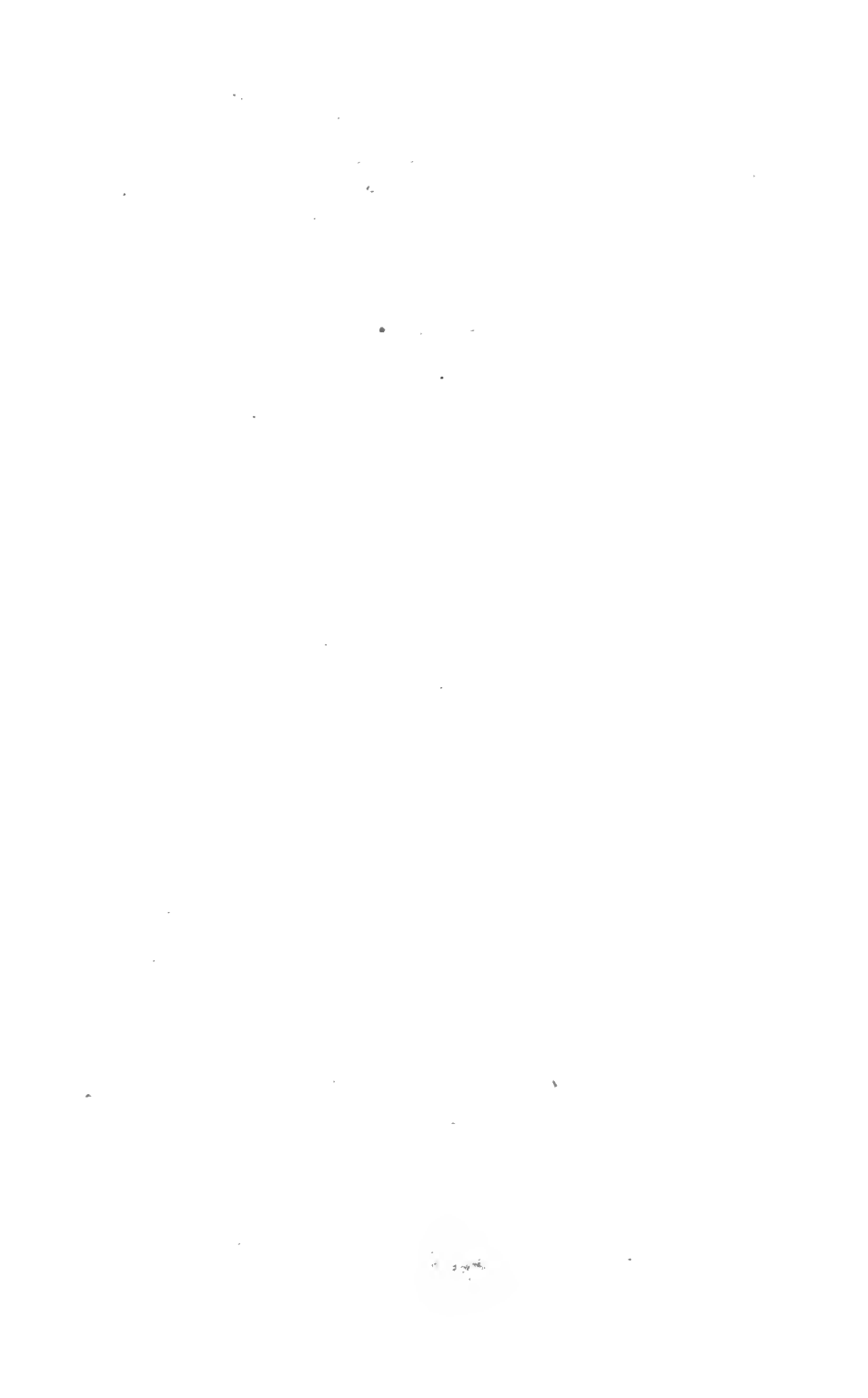
Just in front of the caves of the Baoussé-Roussé,



A SIDE STREET IN MENTONE.



MENTONE: RUE MATTONI.



## The First Visitors to the Riviera

between their entries and the sea, runs the old Roman road. Compared with the colony of Red Cliff it is a modern affair, for it is only a little more than two thousand years old. It ran from the Forum of Rome to Arles, a distance, it is said, of 797 miles. It carried the Roman legions into Gaul. It carried the merchant adventurers from the East, together with as miscellaneous a crowd of wanderers as any road in Europe bears witness of. Many a Roman centurion must have rested in these caves, many an Oriental pedlar laden with strange wares, many a man of arms seeking his fortune in the West, with perhaps a troubadour or two, a jester bound to other Courts, or the aimless man who followed the Wandering Jew. Pirates have used these caves for their tragic affairs, as well as wreckers and honest fishermen. In more recent times smugglers found hereabout convenient depots from which to run their goods across the border; while frontier guards have been posted in these shadows with flintlocks to watch for the unwary buccaneer. Still nearer to the present day one can imagine that the dolorous lover has carved his lady's name upon the wall of the cave by means of a flint implement which his uneasy foot had unearthed from among the ancient dust of the deserted dwelling-place. Could the life and times of the occupants of the Red Cliff be written, from the days of the first inhabitant to the period of to-day, a history of Europe would be provided which could never be excelled for picturesqueness nor for vivid detail.

The environment of the old colony is at the moment singularly incongruous. The entrance to the principal cave is walled up and admission thereto can only be

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

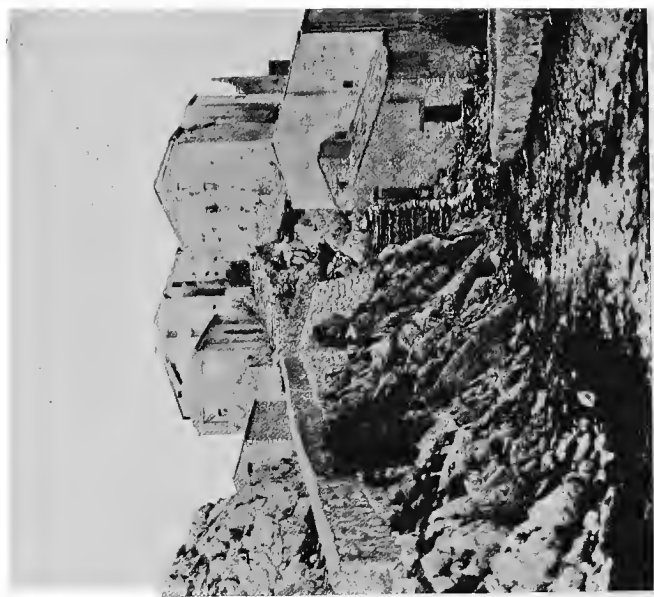
obtained by the payment of 2f. per person. A small museum, full of precious bones, stands on the Roman road; a railway tunnel penetrates the very heart of the cliff, so that the rumble of express trains disturbs the peace of the dead who still lie on the very spot where their bodies were laid long centuries ago. There is a fashionable hotel on the summit of the cliff, and at its foot a popular restaurant. From the depths of the cave the sound of music can be heard when the restaurant is very exuberant and is offering especial cheer.

If the old lady with the bracelets were now to stand at the door of her cave on a starry night she could see, beyond Mentone, a strange glow in the sky, the glow from the thousand lights of the gaming-rooms of Monte Carlo.





CASTILLON (IN THE SNOW).



CASTILLON : THE ENTRY TO THE TOWN.



## XXXVIII

### CASTILLON

**A**MONG the mountains behind Mentone is a saddle of rock wedged in between two heights and named the Col de la Garde. If a Colossus sat astride of this saddle one leg would be in the Valley of the Careï, leading towards Mentone, and the other in the Merlanson Valley which descends to Sospel. The col or ridge of the saddle is 2,527 feet above the level of the sea. On a cone of rock in the centre of this ridge is the ghostly town of Castillon. The distance from Mentone to Castillon is four miles, if measured by the flight of a bird, and nine and a half miles if reckoned by the ingenious road. From Castillon to Sospel by road is four and a half miles, but the descent is not great for Sospel is still 1,148 feet above the Mediterranean.

The Valley of the Careï is picturesque and of no little grandeur. It is a prodigious V-shaped gash in the earth, some half a mile wide where it opens to the heavens, some few feet wide at its deepest depth where the torrent cuts its way. The colouring of its walls is beautiful in its simplicity. Below the blue of the sky is a cinder-grey slope of bare cliff that dips into the faded green of the olive belt and the sprightlier green of the pines; then comes a strip of claret-red tinged with yellow, which marks the terrace of the autumn vines,

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

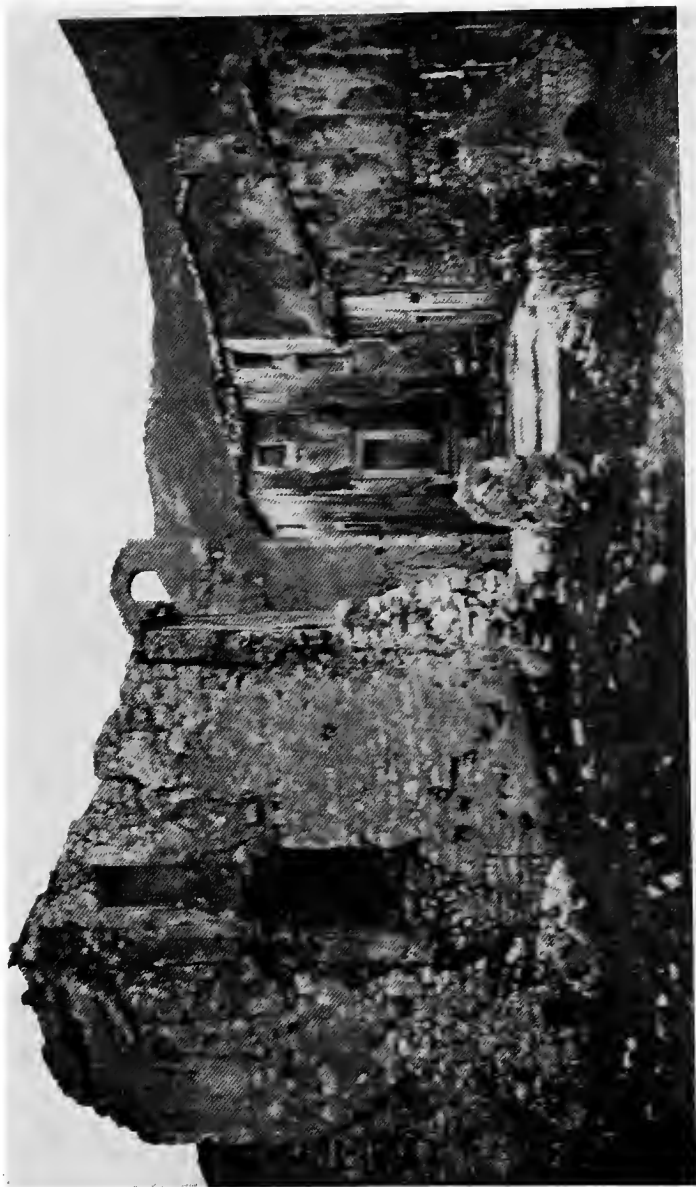
and at the very foot are the deep shadows by the banks of the stream.

The Careï follows the valley all the way. It begins among the vast silence of the everlasting hills and ends by running under the tramlines and the bandstand at Mentone. The road mounts up the west bank of the valley by spasmodic turns and twists. These are so repeated and so abrupt as to render any who live where paths are straight dazed and despairing.

As the col is approached Castillon stands up against the sky line like a piece of dead bone sticking out of the mound of a grave. Few habitations of man occupy a position quite so surprising as this silent and deserted village. It is the village of a nightmare, of a fairy story, of the country of the impossible. "The town," writes the author of "A Winter at Mentone," "is as unlike a town as possible . . . so that we should scarcely believe it to be a town at all." It stands on the summit of a pinnacle of stone which is, in turn, balanced on the knife edge of a dizzy col. From this isolated crag a horrible ridge of rock trails down the valley towards Sospel like the backbone of some awful reptile.

It is a very ancient place for it was occupied in the time of the Romans. People have lived in Castillon for over 2,000 years and yet on a certain day not long ago it was suddenly deserted and not a human being has ever returned to make a home in it since that dire occasion.

On February 23rd, 1887, Castillon was shaken by an earthquake and reduced in great part to ruin. No one appears to have been killed in the crash, but such was the terror of the inhabitants that they fled down the cliff-



CASTILLON: THE MAIN STREET.



## Castillon

side and never came back to the town again. It has remained ever since as empty as a skull.

In the Middle Ages Castillon was maintained as a fortified place by the governor of Sospel. It guarded the pass that led to the town and stood in the way of Sospel's most restless enemy, the Count of Ventimiglia. During the wars of the Guelphs and the Ghibellines the fortress of Castillon suffered much. It was a woeful day when Charles of Anjou obtained possession of it in 1261 and a still more dismal day when he sold it to that detested ruffian, Pierre Balbo of Ventimiglia, since, in the eyes of Sospel, Castillon was the keeper of the pass, the angel with the flaming sword that stood in the way. For no vain reason did the ridge gain the name of the Col de la Garde.

Castillon did not remain long in the hands of Ventimiglia. It shared in the vicissitudes of endless conflicts, was in due course taken by the Genoese and then retaken by the redoubtable seneschal of Provence. Castillon was ever a sturdy little place; for even in its earliest days, when it was captured by the Saracens, the hardy natives turned upon the invaders, cast them out and threw them headlong down the hill. It was not always so very little, since there was a time when it could boast of no fewer than seventy-five houses and five churches. Where these buildings found a foothold it is hard to say. They must have clung to one another with linked arms, like a crowd of men caught by a rising tide on a steep and very meagre rock.

The old Castillon is approached from the present village by a steep cart-road which winds round the rock, or by a still steeper mule-path which labours up with

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

many zigzags. Both road and path are overgrown with grass. They lead to a flight of wide steps which ascends to the town. It forms quite a ceremonial entry. There is but a single street. It is a sorrowful street, because it is so forlorn and so still. It is as green with grass as a lane in a wood and around the doorsteps of the houses and in every court and alley nettles and brambles flourish with heartless luxuriance.

Half way along the street is the church. It is small and plain with a roof of tiles and a bell gable that lacks a bell. Over the door is the date 1712. The church is locked; but so far as can be judged from the outer walls it has escaped damage. The "pointed campanile," however, which is described and figured in older accounts is now no longer to be seen. At the end of the street, on the point that looks towards Sospel, are the ruins of the castle. Only some vaults and some crumbling walls remain; but a gateway of stone with a pointed arch still stands unmoved amidst the chaos of destruction. Many houses are little more than a shell of bricks, but the greater number seem to have suffered little. They are closed. The doors, the window frames and the sun shutters are grey, because in thirty-three years every trace of paint has vanished. Many of the windows are still glazed.

To one house clings a precarious balcony of wood with half of its rail intact. A few of the dwellings are doorless and it is possible to mount stairs laden with débris, to enter rooms which seem to have been but recently left and to climb down into hollow chambers echoing with mystery and suspicion. One front door has a slit for letters—open as if awaiting the





CASTILLON: THE MAIN STREET AND CHURCH DOOR.



## Castillon

postman. It is a trivial feature and yet it seems the most pitiable mockery in the whole of this street of dead things.

The desolation of the little town is unutterable. If it were a total ruin the human element would be lost ; but it is so little a ruin, so like a living village of to-day—with the ashes of the kitchen fire still on the hearth—that it remains even now a vivid embodiment of a place dumb with panic and the fear of death.

## XXXIX

### SOSPEL

**S**OSPEL lies at the bottom of a vast basin-shaped valley by the banks of the ever-chattering Bevera river. The sides of the valley are lined from base to summit with olive trees. It is not a pretty valley, for the green of the olive, being sad and wan, suggests rather the shabby dreariness of old age. In this sombre hollow Sospel appears as a patch of chocolate-brown. The valley is so immense and the town so small that it is little more than a dark stain at the bottom of a huge bowl. Sospel has fallen far from its high estate. It was once domineering and haughty and now it has become so humble and so insignificant. It once had the splendour of a soft-petalled rose, but it has dwindled in these days to a mere pinch of dry and shrivelled leaves. In Roman times it was a town of importance. It was a military station fully garrisoned and strongly fortified. It represented the mailed fist of Rome thrust defiantly into the land of Gaul. Those who are learned in these matters state that the lines of the Roman ramparts can still be traced about the outskirts of Sospel, but they are no longer visible to the eyes of the vulgar.

After the glory of Rome had passed away Sospel still remained a commanding city and, throughout the Middle Ages and for century after century, it held its



SOSPEL : THE OLD BRIDGE.



## Sospel

place as a most influential town in this domain of France. It became the seat of a bishop as early as 1337 and Alberti, the historian of Sospel,<sup>1</sup> tells of its high clerics, of its consuls, of its judges and of its other exalted men. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it was a city with many thousands of inhabitants. It was surrounded by high walls, had five gates and many strong towers. It could boast of no fewer than one hundred and sixty-two shops and two *monti di pietà*. It had a cathedral and as many as twenty churches and chapels, fifteen squares, many convents and monasteries, an academy and a college for lawyers.<sup>2</sup> A great fair was held every year on St. Luke's Day in October in the Piazza di San Michele, for Sospel was a centre of commerce and of industry for miles around.

The town has seen much trouble and has endured periods of stress and times of calamity. Indeed so sad have been some phases of its history that, although it can boast of years of flamboyant glory, it is probable that its happiest days are now, when it has become a village of no account. About the end of the eighth century Sospel was almost entirely destroyed by fire. In 1516 it was ravaged by the Gascons and reduced, for the time, to a smouldering waste. In the sixteenth century the town became prominent as a place of horror by reason of the wholesale burning of heretics in the Piazza di San Michele.

Possibly the most terrible calamity that befell Sospel was through the visitations of the plague. The most disastrous of these visits was in the year 1688. The

<sup>1</sup> "Istoria della città de Sospello," by S. Alberti, Torino, 1728.

<sup>2</sup> "Mentone," by Dr. George Müller, London, 1910.

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

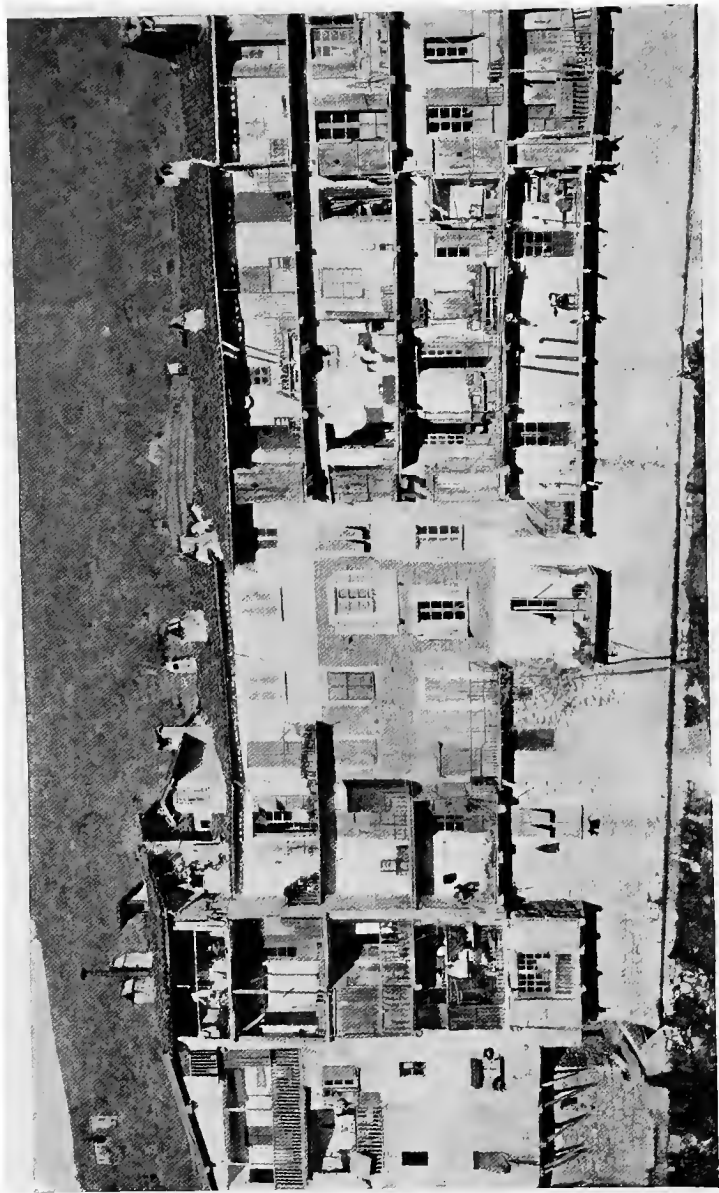
people died as if the very air were poisoned. The streets were deserted; the shops were closed. Those who knelt in the church to pray could hear above their cries to heaven the thud of the mattock and the spade in the graveyard near at hand. It seemed as if Sospel was to be left desolate and that in a few dire weeks the river would be babbling seawards through a lifeless town.

The elders of the city met and resolved that all the inhabitants of the place, those whom the Terror as yet had spared, should make a pilgrimage to Laghet to confess their sins and implore the Madonna to intercede with heaven on their behalf. At sunrise one pleasant day in July the procession formed up outside the walls and started on its penitential march. It was a hard journey and very pitiable. The distance was great; for even as the bird flies it is no less than ten miles from Sospel to Laghet.

There was no road to follow, only a rough path that struggled over hills and vales, over rocks and stony slopes. The poor distracted company would climb first to Castillon, thence probably to Gorbio, then on to La Turbie and so to Laghet. It would be an arduous journey for a sturdy man, but for these panic-stricken folk it was as cruel a passage as the most relentless could devise.

In front of the column would walk the priests clad in white and bearing a cross. Then would come the great officers of the city with the nobles of Sospel, then the soldiers and after them the people of the town. Along the length of the column would break forth, again and again, the cry, "In the name of God on to Laghet!"





SOSPEL: THE RIVER FRONT.



## Sospel

There would be old and young in the crowd, boys clinging to their mothers' gowns, girls perched on their fathers' shoulders and pleased for a while with the unwonted ride. The buxom maid would give an arm to her grandfather, the young husband a hand to his faltering wife. There would be some on mules and some on donkeys and at the wavering end of the procession would stumble the stragglers who were failing with every step.

Not a few would be smitten with death as they walked, would drop out of the throng and roll among the brambles by the way. None could linger behind to bear them company, for still the cry would ring forth along the line, "In the name of God on to Laghet!"

Think then of the town left behind! Silent but for the heartless chatter of the stream, empty save for the very old, the very weak, the dying and the dead.

Sospel, when viewed from a height, appears (as already stated) as a splash of chocolate-brown on the floor of a grey valley, chocolate-brown being the colour of its roofs. It is a small place of 3,500 inhabitants languidly busy in the construction of a railway which seems disinclined to develop and still more feebly concerned in a golf course which declines to "open."

The town is divided into two parts by the Bevera river. The quarter on the north bank is poor and resigned to a damp and musty squalor; while the south side of the town contains all that Sospel can boast of in the matter of present prosperity and departed greatness. Two bridges—one old and one new—connect the towns. The old bridge is picturesque, being composed of two very ancient arches which have never come to an agreement as to what should be their common level. In the

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

centre of the bridge is a little, old, surly tower which forms an arch over the road after the manner of a village Temple Bar. The tower has been converted, with marked unsuccess, into a dwelling house with a bow window and balcony on its less dejected front and with gaudy advertisements on its other sides. Since no one appears to have the courage to live in this impossible dwelling it is empty. As a tower to defend the ford it is a monument of incompetence and as a house on a bridge of the type of those on the Ponte Vecchio at Florence it is a sorry thing. It is indeed neither a tower nor a house. It is merely a failure.

The north town is made up of old buildings and narrow lanes which are filled with gloom and with a smell so pressing that it can almost be felt with the hand. The main lane, and the most pungent, is called the Rue de la République. If it be intended by its title to flatter the Republic of France the compliment is doubtful.

The fronts of the houses that look into the lane are of great antiquity, but the backs that look on to the river are unreasonably modern. This river front of Sospel is one of its most curious sights. The houses are of four stories and each floor of each house is provided with a balcony. Except that they all look fragile and unsafe and the work of a rash amateur builder, no two balconies are quite alike. One may pertain to a kitchen, another to a sitting-room and a third to a bedroom and each balcony will contain the paraphernalia proper to its particular apartment. The united display of utensils shows how complex and exacting human life has become since the days of the cave man. I never before realised



SOSPEL: THE PLACE ST. MICHEL.



## Sospel

that so many buckets are required to satisfy the needs of a modern community.

Each balcony gives a demonstration of some phase of domestic life, conducted without any prudish pretence at concealment. Viewed as a whole they form a series of little stages upon which every episode of the home is being displayed in the open air. On a fourth floor balcony a woman will be cooking, while in the balcony below a young woman is "doing" her hair—a curious operation to watch since she tugs at her hair as if it belonged to a person she did not like. On a third balcony a woman may be stuffing a chair or mending a stocking; while on yet another may be witnessed in detail the whole tiresome process of dressing a child. One balcony has been turned into a fowl-house and another is devoted to the cultivation of a vine. On all these little galleries washing in some stage is in progress for washing among these people is like a familiar air running, with endless repetitions, through the music of a comedy of life.

The main town of Sospel is full of all the interest and charm that surrounds a relic of the Middle Ages. It is made up of unmanageable little streets that *will* run where they like, of lanes so dim that they suggest the light of a dying lamp and of gracious houses whose beauty is soiled by grimy hands and marred by the patchwork of poverty, like a fine piece of tapestry that has been darned as uncouthly as a labourer's sock. There are black passages as well as brilliant little squares, unaccountable stairways and mysterious arcades. Some of the streets are so narrow as to be mere cracks in a block of houses, while two at least, the Rue Pellegrini and the

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Rue du Château, are no more than moist, obscure gutters.

Many of the houses, although they stand now in mean streets, have evidently been public buildings of importance or palaces of the great people of Sospel. These houses are built of stone, have noble entries and fine windows, some of which still parade pointed arches and delicate columns. There is an old mansion of this type in the Rue St. Pierre which is still magnificent in spite of the humiliating indignities to which it has been subjected. Less ambitious houses show traces of light-hearted decoration in the form of arcading or other fanciful work in stone.

The centre of the town is the Place St. Michel, a small, irregular square with the church on one side and, elsewhere, a medley of houses built over arcades. This piazza is quite Italian in character, is rather dissolute-looking and bears many evidences of having come down in the world.

The church, which is approached by a flight of wide steps, belongs to the seventeenth century, has been judiciously restored and has a façade of no little beauty. By its side is a very ancient campanile of dingy grey stone surmounted by a curious pyramidal steeple. It has stood in this square for hundreds of vivid years and if it could tell of all that it has seen it would recount a story tragic enough. Its bells have many times clanged forth the alarm. Its watchman has often screamed from the tower that armed men were swarming down the hill. It has seen the ladies of the town, in silks and satins, step daintily across the Place on their way to Mass through a crowd of cap-doffing citizens. It has heard





A SQUARE IN SOSPEL.



SOSPEL : THE RUINS OF THE CONVENT.



## Sospel

the consul read out a proclamation to a sullen mob, while yells of dissent have belched forth from the dark arcades like a volley of musketry; and more lamentable than all it has seen a sinister column of smoke rise out of the square from the blaze of crackling faggots upon which shrieking heretics, bound hand and foot, were thrown like bundles of fuel.

Beyond the church, in an untidy garden, are the ruins of an old convent which still show the long colonnade of the cloisters and the windows of the upper rooms. Near by is one of the old square towers of the town, a mere shell of masonry that the sun of centuries has bleached as white as a bone. Alongside the tower runs a section of the city wall, pierced by a stone gateway with a pointed arch. This mediæval entry is very picturesque; for it serves to show how Sospel looked to the approaching traveller when it was a fortified city girt about by a great wall with many gates and many towers.

## XL

### SOSPEL AND THE WILD BOAR

**I**T may be of some interest to state how the affairs of Sospel became involved with so curious a creature as a wild boar, and how the people of Sospel were led to have a kindly regard for this particular species of pig. In the year 1866 a respected citizen of Sospel named Guglielmo Viteola started off with his son to go to Mentone. On the way they were attacked by a gang of robbers and the lad was killed. The robbers spared Viteola because they considered that he would be of more value to them living than dead.

So they dragged him to a cave, bound him hand and foot, and left him in a doleful heap on the wet ground. They explained, with sarcastic apologies, that they must leave him for a time as they had to proceed to Mentone on urgent business; but cheered him by saying that they would look him up on their return and would then do dreadful things to him unless he made agreeable terms for his ransom. Failing a comfortable sum of money they explained that they would either leave him to starve or would cut him up in a leisurely way with knives of peculiar grossness that they showed him. With a cheerful "a rivederci" they departed.

Being in grievous pains both of body and mind Viteola began to pray to his particular saint, St. Theobald of



A STREET IN SOSPEL.





SOSPEL: THE CITY WALL AND GATE.





## Sospel and the Wild Boar

Mondovi. (Mondovi, it may be explained, is a town some fifty miles from Sospel on the way to Turin.) Viteola had hardly finished his prayer when something or somebody rushed into the cave and fell at his feet. The darkness of the place rendered the identity of the intruder difficult. From his knowledge of natural history and possibly from his sense of smell Viteola decided that this visitor was a wild boar. The boar seemed fatigued and anxious to be quiet.

The animal's rest was, however, soon disturbed for in a few moments five armed men burst into the cave. The cavern was becoming crowded. Odd things are often found in caves, but these new arrivals seemed very surprised at the combination of an ancient man tied up like a parcel in company with a languid boar. They requested Viteola to explain the unusual position. He did. The aged man further informed them that he had prayed to St. Theobald for help, but hardly expected that the relief would take the copious form of five men and a boar. He, at the same time, begged to be released from his bonds. This was promptly done. Whereupon the more prominent of the visitors introduced himself as the Lord of Gorbio and added that he was out hunting, that he had wounded a wild boar and had followed the animal to the cave.

The boar became extremely amiable. He may have been a little cool to the Lord of Gorbio, but towards the old man he made such demonstrations of affection as a weary boar is capable of making.

The party then proceeded to Sospel. Their arrival caused some amazement, for even in 1366 it was unusual to see a reigning prince walking down the High Street

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

followed by armed men and an esteemed citizen at whose heels a wild boar was limping like a faithful dog. The animal became a great pet, but it was probably a long time before Viteola's wife was accustomed to the sight of a wild boar stretched out in front of the sitting-room fire.

When the robbers returned from Mentone and entered the cave with derisive cheers and coarse laughter they were surprised to find themselves seized by armed men from Gorbio and their valued citizen gone. These wicked men were, without any tedious inquiry, hanged from a tree which the chronicle states, with topographical precision, "stood by the pathway leading from Sospello to Mentone."

## XLI

### TWO QUEER OLD TOWNS

**A**LUXURIANT valley of pure delight mounts inland from the sea by Mentone. It is a happy, friendly-looking valley, richly cultivated, full of orange groves and vineyards, of comfortable gardens and of merry mills. The valley ends suddenly in a vast amphitheatre of bare heights which shuts out all the world beyond. As if by a stroke of magic vegetation ceases and the green becomes grey. In the centre of the semicircle and on a steep promontory that commands the valley stands GORBIO, like a monument at the end of an avenue. It is eight kilometres by road from Mentone, for the way to it twists about like a wounded snake.

It is difficult to determine what adjective should be applied to Gorbio. The guide book says that it is picturesque, but the "Concise Oxford Dictionary" defines "picturesque" as "fit to be the subject of a striking picture." Now there is nothing about Gorbio that is fit for a striking picture. It may be fit for pieces of a picture as they lie in a toy-box as parts of a puzzle town waiting to be put together. Then a visitor told me that Gorbio was "awfully quaint"; but there is little in Gorbio to excite awe and the dictionary says that "quaint" means that which is "piquant in virtue of

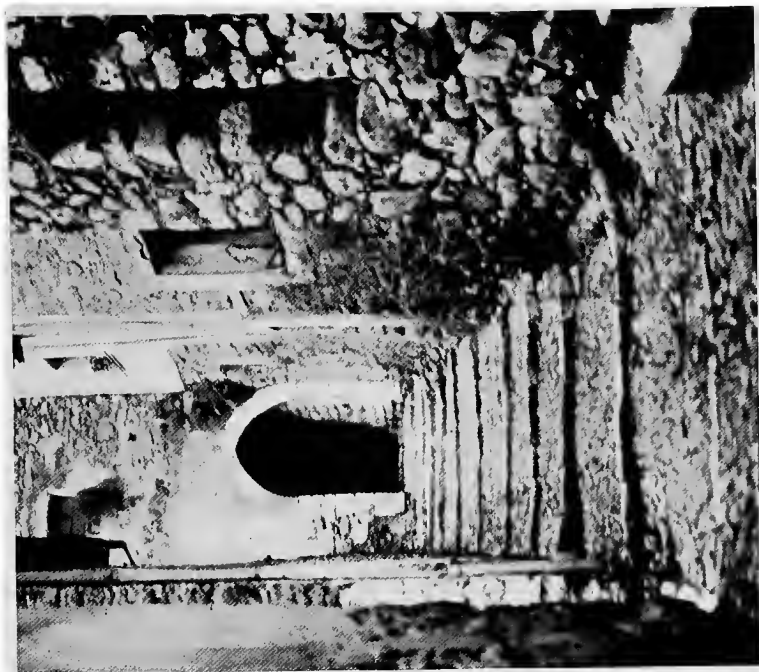
## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

unfamiliar, especially old fashioned, appearance." This town is happily of unfamiliar appearance and is also without pretence to any fashion old or new, but yet it is not piquant, except in its smell.

It would rather be called a whimsical town, a medley, a *revue* of mediæval towns made up of selected fragments, an ancient mongrel of a town of involved and bewildering parentage. It is like three people all talking at once and in different languages. Those who regard a town as a place of habitation made by man, a place with streets, ordered residences, a square, a church and public buildings would maintain that Gorbio is not a town.

It begins well. It commences with an orthodox square containing a café on either side, an aged tree, a fountain, a postcard shop and a sleeping dog. All this is reassuring and in order. At one corner of the Place a few steps slope up to a gateway with a pointed arch. This also is quite a normal entry to a town. But once inside the gate everything is topsy-turvy and unexpected. You find yourself in a lane, but it is more like a passage through rocks than the high street of a town. The road at once dives under buildings and comes up in a narrow square on one side of which is an official-looking *Mairie*, very modern, with walls of a fashionable yellow, green sun-shutters and a flag pole. Opposite to it are some deserted houses of great age which are in a state of advanced decomposition.

You then come to a damp and dark tunnel. As there is a gleam of light at the end of it you enter and are at once seized by a smell—a smell of Augean stables. This is no "perfume wafted on the breeze"; but a smell that



A STREET IN GORBIO.



A STREET IN GORBIO.



## Two Queer Old Towns

comes upon you like a shriek, grips you by the throat like a highwayman and throttles you. You rush forward to the open air and stumble among houses made up of loose rocks and superfluous doors propped up by outside stairs.

To the right are some steps climbing up through another tunnel that may be a passage in a mine. The exploring spirit urges you to mount this dark ascent. You come out into a real street with real houses and even a shop, but the street is narrow and the way is entirely occupied by a live cow. The cow is standing patiently outside a house that has white steps and a knocker and seems to be waiting for an answer to a message. It has a pleasant and motherly face, but appears, as to its body, to be of unreasonable size. As it is impossible to pass the cow without pushing it into a house you return by the tunnel to the original route. This route now takes the form of a country lane lined with boulders on which grow ferns and other plants of interest and here incontinently appears a church—a fine and ancient edifice bearing the date 1683. Beyond the church you find yourself—not in a cemetery but—on the ramparts of a fortified town and finally by the side of a quite new building of great height, clean and formal, which, at first sight, may be a barrack or a soap factory, but there are neither soldiers nor (I think) soap in Gorbio.

From this point the town becomes merely incoherent. It expresses itself in terms of delirium. There are streets that go up and down like the hump of a camel, streets that form parts of circles and streets that form parts of squares. A map of all the lanes, passages, stairs and tunnels of Gorbio would look like all the diagrams of

## The Riviera of the Corniche Road

Euclid mixed up together. The surface of the town reproduces the undulations of the waves of the sea. A man walking before you disappears and appears again as if he walked on the ocean. The path may now be on a level with the belfry of the church and now with the main door. Indeed the church goes up and down as if it were a pier seen from the deck of a rolling ship.

It would seem as if, at one time, Gorbio had been in a plastic condition, like a town made of wax, and that it had then been ruffled by a hot and mighty wind and its streets and foundations thrown into ripples which have hardened into stone. It would also seem as if this convulsion had had the effect of mixing up the component parts of a mediæval town with more modern structures. Thrown up on the summit of Gorbio is the square tower of the old castle; but it is so fused with stables and poor dwellings that, but for its exquisite window, it might be a hayloft over a cow-house. Mule-paths are mixed up with vaulted passages and narrow lanes with cellar stairs, a prison wall with a grilled window has become the wall of a cottage, bits of a feudal fortress have been melted up with hovels, a fine arch of stone leads to a donkey-shed, the portal of a chapter house to a mean kitchen, while the hall of a *palazzo* has become a pen for goats. Forever above this jumble of buildings there rises, like the steam from a witches' cauldron, the smell of a stable of so horrible a kind that not even a Hercules could cleanse it.

Gorbio is a town of five hundred and fifty inhabitants, placed at a height of 1,425 feet above the sea. It is a very ancient place, for Dr. Müller finds an account





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## Two Queer Old Towns

of its castle as far back as the year 1002. The town has had its full share of misfortunes and horrors. It has been possessed, in turn, by the Counts of Ventimiglia, by the Genoese, by the Grimaldi and by the great family of the Lascaris. Each change of tenancy meant a more or less liberal amount of bloodshed. At one time, namely in 1257, it was the property of the beautiful Beatrix of Provence, she who was platonically beloved by the troubadour of Eze (page 126). It may be sure that under the rule of this gentle lady Gorbio had at least some days of peace. It is no wonder that with all its troubles and with all the assaults it has received it has been battered out of shape and has become, in its old age, so very queer.

A ragged mule path mounts up from Gorbio to ST. AGNES. It is very steep and its length is measured not by metres but by minutes; for if you ask how far it is to St. Agnes the answer is an hour to an hour and a half. St. Agnes as a town is not simply queer, it is frankly ridiculous. It is perched on the sharp point of a cone of precipitous rock and, from afar, looks like a brown beetle clinging to the top of a grey sugarloaf. How it came to be placed there no one can say, for a cautious eagle would hesitate to make its home at such a height. If it wanted to get away from the world it has succeeded, for it is nearly out of it. It can scarcely be said to be on the face of the earth, but rather on the tip of its nose.

There are no means of reaching St. Agnes except by a mule-path or a balloon. Nothing on wheels has ever entered the precincts of the town. Thus it happens that the most curious "sights" at St. Agnes

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are a piano and a great chandelier in one of the two excellent restaurants of the place. The interest inspired by these articles is not intrinsic, but is aroused by the wonder as to how they got there. The spectacle of a mule toiling up a path, as steep as a stair, with a piano on its back, followed by another mule bearing a wide-spreading chandelier and perhaps by a third laden with a wardrobe is a spectacle to marvel at.

St. Agnes is a town of about five hundred inhabitants standing at an altitude of 2,200 feet. How the people live and why they live where they do is an economic and social problem of the profoundest character, for the country just around St. Agnes is as bare as a boulder. The town itself is of the colour of sackcloth and ashes, being drab and brown. In general disposition it is very like Gorbio, being as old, as deranged and as inconsequent. There are the same arcades, the same vaulted passages, the same erratic lanes. The church resembles the church at Gorbio. It bears the date 1744 but represents a building many centuries older. High up above the town, on a point of apparently inaccessible rock, are the ruins of the castle which was, at one time, a famous Saracen stronghold. It is represented now by a few broken and jagged walls which can hardly be distinguished from the crags out of which they spring. It is needless to say that the views from St. Agnes, both towards the mountains and towards the sea, are superb.

The place is of great antiquity. Its early years are legendary, but from the twelfth century onwards it played a part—and no small part—in the affairs of



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the world around it. The details of its life and times differ but slightly from those of Gorbio; for the fortunes of the two queer towns were closely linked together.

To explain how St. Agnes ever came to exist it is necessary to resort to legend and to the very hackneyed subject of the princess who lost her way. The name of this particular royal lady was Agnes. She was unwisely making a tour in this barren and impossible country, when the usual terrific storm appeared with the usual result—the lady lost her way. She must have lost it badly, for she found herself near the summit of the crag upon which St. Agnes now stands. This is equivalent to a person climbing up to the dome of St. Paul's in the hope of finding there a way that would lead to Fleet Street. The lady called upon her patron saint, St. Agnes, to guide her to shelter and was miraculously directed to a grotto near the spot where the town is now established. Hence the town and hence the name.





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